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New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Abdalla Saleh Al-Ashtal, Chairman of the delegation of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me, at the outset, to extend to you, Mr. President, my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Let me also pay a tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who guided the work of the previous session of the General Assembly most successfully.

This session acquires special importance, not only because it is the first of the new millennium, but also because it coincides with the convening of the Millennium Summit, which gathered together, for the first time, a majority of the world's leaders. Therefore, the historic instruments that emerged from the Summit were a culmination of that momentous occasion.

The Republic of Yemen, as President Ali Abdullah Saleh emphasized in his statement at the Millennium Summit, is committed to achieving those ideals and objectives, supporting the leadership role of the United Nations and promoting the purposes of its Charter, with a view to upholding the principles of freedom, equality and justice, so that every society can assume its national responsibilities for comprehensive and sustainable development, including poverty eradication, the provision of food, shelter, health care and education, ensuring fundamental freedoms, human rights and democracy and enabling women to play their role in society.

Accordingly, the Republic of Yemen supports efforts by the Secretary-General to develop the role, mechanisms and organs of the international Organization to meet the challenges of twenty-first century. It also supports moves towards the renewal and development of inter-State relations and towards bringing them into line with new global phenomena that call for democracy, respect for human rights and the transformation of globalization into a positive force that will benefit all inhabitants of the world. In this connection, the Republic of Yemen reaffirms its invitation to host the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in 2003.

Our world has become a single village where events interact globally with no room for isolationism. The merging of States' economies is the most prominent feature of mutual dependency and, consequently, of shared responsibility aimed at creating an environment at the national and global levels conducive to development and poverty eradication. Good governance, as stated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, must exist not only within each country but at the international level and be based on laws and transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems.

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In our view, this requires that the developed industrialized countries fulfil their commitments to provide official development assistance to developing countries, address the special needs of the least developed countries, provide debt relief to poor countries and agree to cancel all official bilateral debts. Within this context we would also include the removal of all barriers against the exports of developing countries seeking access to world markets.

This year our people celebrated the tenth anniversary of the restoration of blessed Yemeni unity. The Republic of Yemen has been able to achieve successes in the democratic process, freedom, justice, respect for human rights and the enablement of women to play their role in society. While our people proceed to incorporate new concepts, with the aim of adapting to new world developments, they suffer from the financial burdens and the assumption of tasks inherent in comprehensive economic and social reform. In addition, the processes relating to economic liberalization — lifting subsidies on various foods and fuel and reducing public services, as prescribed by international financing institutions — have created social tensions. We therefore call upon the advanced industrialized countries to understand this underlying reality of shared responsibility in the context of comprehensive and sustainable development in the developing countries as a guarantee for international development, security and stability.

The Republic of Yemen has persevered in advocating attainment of peace and stability at the regional and the international levels by the surest ways, namely by resolving all disputes peacefully and through the use of mechanisms for the resolution of disputes, which embodies faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We in the Republic of Yemen are proud to have placed practical reliance on those principles in resolving border issues with three neighbouring States: the Sultanate of Oman, Eritrea and, recently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

A new era of brotherhood, cooperation and mutual interests between the Republic of Yemen and the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was inaugurated on 12 June 2000, following the signature of a treaty between the two countries on international territorial and maritime boundaries. We deem it an historic achievement by all criteria, since it ends a long period of tension and instability. The frontiers between the countries have become bridges of love, brotherhood and cooperation. This will, unquestionably, contribute to general stability in the region.

Within this framework one may understand Yemen's strong desire and long-term efforts to contribute to a resolution of the problems that have plagued Somalia. Now that the Arta conference has been held, the Transitional National Assembly has been constituted and the country's President has been elected, we support the implementation of the resolutions that emerged from the conference. We hope that the consensus between the representatives of the various Somali factions present at the conference will lead to stability and prepare the way for the commencement of a process of comprehensive and sustainable development in an atmosphere of national reconciliation. In this regard, we must commend the great efforts made by President Ismail Omar Guelleh of the Republic of Djibouti to ensure the success of the Arta conference.

The return to normalcy in Somalia will unquestionably promote security and stability in the Horn of Africa, which has suffered the scourge of war and its effects. That suffering can be seen in the cross-border flows of refugees. In the case of Yemen, hundreds of thousands of refugees from Somalia and other States of the region have infiltrated the country via our coasts. We appeal to the international community to extend assistance to resolve the problem of refugees and ensure their return to their homelands for the sake of stability and reconstruction in the region.

The Republic of Yemen believes that the peace that people seek is a peace based on justice, equality and respect for human rights. Accordingly, peace in the Middle East should be based primarily on the restoration of all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Foremost among those rights is the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian soil with Jerusalem as its capital. Israel must also withdraw from all occupied Arab territories in the Syrian Golan.

We would also like to convey our esteem and congratulations to fraternal Lebanon and its people on the unconditional liberation of its southern part.

The world is still amassing large quantities of weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons endanger international security and stability and hinder any steps

towards finding solutions to development problems. In accordance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, we in the Republic of Yemen stress the importance of making the Middle East region an area free from nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. We also endorse the international community's call to exert pressure on Israel to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to place all its nuclear installations under international supervision.

Iraq is experiencing a human tragedy as a result of the embargo that has been imposed on it for 10 years. While calling for the implementation of United Nations resolutions concerning Iraq, we stress from this rostrum the need to end that tragic situation by lifting the embargo. It has lasted too long and has caused very extensive damage to the entire Iraqi population, especially women, children and elderly persons. In the same vein, we call for a complete lifting of the embargoes imposed on the Sudan and Libya.

With regard to the dispute over the three Arabian Gulf islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, Yemen hopes that an amicable and peaceful solution to that issue will be decided along the lines followed by the Republic of Yemen in the resolution of its border disputes with its neighbours.

Lastly, we welcome all the resolutions calling for the reform of the United Nations and its structure so as to make it more transparent and democratic, including resolutions concerning the expansion of the membership of the Security Council and enhancing and strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is our hope that resolutions will be adopted at this important session to contribute to the reform and restructuring of the United Nations and its organs in order that it may meet the requirements of the new century, with its increasing problems and ever more complex inter-State relations.

It is our responsibility to make this session an occasion to review our work and to examine the resolutions adopted by our leaders at the Millennium Summit so that we can transform them into tangible reality. Doing so will further our progress towards achieving security, stability, development and prosperity for our countries and peoples. I am confident that our united stance and sincere endeavours will guarantee the success of this session and the achievement of the desired results.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, His Excellency Mr. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun.

Mr. Erdenechuluun (Mongolia): Allow me at the outset to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations. Allow me also to express my confidence that under your skilful stewardship this session of the General Assembly will successfully accomplish its mandate. I also wish to commend our outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his eminent leadership during the previous session of the Assembly.

My delegation extends its warm welcome to the Government and the people of Tuvalu, whose membership has brought the United Nations yet another step closer to universality.

This session of the General Assembly is entrusted with the honourable mission of following up on what was agreed by the Millennium Summit of world leaders. For me personally, this session is also very special. For 26 years, or most of my diplomatic career, I have been associated with the United Nations. I feel particularly privileged to deliver as Foreign Minister a policy statement of my Government from this rostrum.

A few days ago, Member States reaffirmed at the highest level their commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, their unequivocal support for a more efficient and reinvigorated United Nations and their firm resolve to collectively work towards a healthier and cleaner world, free from fear and free from want. The Millennium Declaration underscored the collective responsibility of world leaders to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.

That sense of solidarity and shared responsibility is, in our view, crucial for the international community to be able to address effectively the formidable challenges at the dawn of the new millennium. The challenges the world faces today are indeed manifold and complex, both in scope and nature. The central challenge, as identified in the Secretary-General's millennium report, is how to make globalization more inclusive and have its benefits equitably enjoyed by all nations.

As recently as the mid-1980s, the notion of globality was virtually unknown in the international vocabulary, let alone the concepts of global governance or global climate change. Yet just a little more than a decade later, not only does the idea of globality blend with our day-to-day life, globalization per se has turned into a powerful and inevitable process. Globalization has been generously showered lately with both praise and criticism. Along with greater opportunities, it can also lead to situations of heightened insecurity, especially for the weak and poor nations. As my President, Natsagiyn Bagabandi, noted in his Millennium address,

> "Mongolia believes that, with its impartiality and universal legitimacy, as well as its Charter-based prevalence over any other international agreement, the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide an overarching general guidance to the process of globalization ... so that it incorporates the human dimension in its seemingly unruly trends". (*A/55/PV.4*)

As we draw lessons from the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, it has become more evident that the process of globalization ought to be managed so as to make the best of its opportunities and diminish its negative effects; and that internal policies, no matter how righteous, are not sufficient to ensure sustained economic growth in this era of growing interdependence. This is even more true for developing, structurally disadvantaged countries. In a globally liberalized trade and financial system, these countries need to be assisted to withstand powerful external forces, which so often are utterly destructive. Again, this necessitates a genuine display of solidarity and shared responsibility on the part of the international community.

The global fight against abject poverty, inequality and disparity, violence, HIV/AIDS, organized crime and other acute problems is being impeded by, inter alia, the increasing external debt burden, the decline in official development assistance and the growing digital and development divides between haves and have-nots. The affluent countries could exhibit their solidarity and shared responsibility by further opening their markets, providing deeper and faster debt relief, and giving more and better-focused development assistance and incentives for foreign direct investment flows to their less fortunate partners. In this context, Mongolia looks to the upcoming high-level international conference on financing for development, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and the new multilateral trade negotiations to produce specific, time-bound commitments.

Mongolia welcomes the South Summit Declaration and the Havana Programme of Action as well as the outcome of the meeting between the G-77 and the G-8 in Okinawa as important junctures providing an inspiring vision for more action-oriented South-South cooperation and a meaningful North-South partnership.

My delegation attaches great importance to the decisions adopted at the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which underscored the necessity of creating a legal environment that would facilitate transit traffic for landlocked developing countries, improve transit infrastructure and increase efficiency of trade by eliminating transport and bureaucratic bottlenecks. Here, I am pleased to announce that a first specific step to enhance and facilitate multilateral transit transport cooperation is being taken in the North-East Asian region. As a result of a tripartite meeting held in Ulan Bator under the auspices of UNCTAD earlier this year, Mongolia, Russia and China have agreed to conclude a transit traffic framework agreement. Negotiations to draft such an agreement are under way.

My delegation further believes that the upcoming fifth meeting of governmental experts from landlocked and transit developing countries and representatives of donor countries and financial development institutions, as well as a ministerial meeting on transit transport issues, expected to be held in 2003, will play a critical role in strengthening a common framework of action to ease the burden faced by landlocked developing countries.

We support the proposals put forward in the millennium report by the Secretary-General on improving the provision of health services and communications in areas stricken by natural disasters. As some might be aware, heavy snowstorms and the extremely cold winter of 1999-2000 in Mongolia caused the loss of nearly 3 million heads of livestock, or about 10 per cent of the nation's entire livestock population. Besides the direct loss of livestock, these heavy winter conditions, known as *dzud*, had other gravely devastating economic and social consequences,

including the loss of precious human lives. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my Government and the people of Mongolia, our sincere gratitude to those Governments, international organizations and individuals that rendered timely assistance and support in our efforts to overcome the consequences of *dzud*.

As world leaders solemnly reaffirmed in their Millennium Declaration,

> "the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development."(*A/RES/55/2, para. 32*)

If the United Nations is to adequately respond to the challenges of today's increasingly interdependent and rapidly changing world, a great deal will depend on its ability to adapt itself to an environment that is markedly different from the one in which it was conceived by its founders 55 years ago.

The demands on the Organization have increased many times over, especially in the area of peacekeeping. The lessons of Srebrenica, Rwanda and Sierra Leone have made it abundantly clear that a thorough and critical review is needed to make peacekeeping operations succeed in meeting our commitment under the Charter. We are deeply indebted to the United Nations Panel on Peace Operations, chaired by Ambassador Brahimi, which, in its report, presented a frank analysis of the prevailing situation and forthright recommendations for change. The report deserves serious consideration and specific action at this session of the General Assembly.

Mongolia stands committed to making a practical contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations. As part of its efforts to adequately equip its military officers and units for participation therein, Mongolia took part for the first time in recent training exercises held in Kazakhstan for Central Asian countries.

Efforts to reform the Security Council have not yet brought us closer to resolving some of the fundamental issues on the agenda of the Open-ended Working Group on that question. Like many others, we continue to believe that the expansion of the Security Council should take place made in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. In the former category, along with major industrialized Powers such as Japan and Germany, developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America that are able to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security should occupy their rightful place in the Council. A reasonable increase in the number of non-permanent seats would reflect the representative character of the Council and enable a growing number of Member States to contribute to its work. An essential part of the reform process should deal with the veto power, the use of which should be considerably curtailed.

Mongolias vision of the future of the United Nations has been elaborated in the memorandum of its Government on enhancing the role of the United Nations in promoting the security interests of small States, circulated in the United Nations as document A/55/310.

North-East Asia is a region where the interests of the big and powerful intersect, where the leftovers of the cold-war era are still discernible, and where territorial disputes await a positive solution. Nonetheless, groundbreaking developments are taking place which give rise to optimism and hope. I have in mind the historic inter-Korean summit, which has played a crucial role for building trust and confidence between the two countries. This and other recent developments may well have a positive impact on the situation in North-East Asia as a whole.

Due to its historical and geopolitical realities, North-East Asia is probably the only subregion that lacks a mechanism at the governmental level where security issues of concern can be discussed collectively. Various ideas and proposals to this effect have been floating around for some time, but no serious discussion of this issue has taken place so far at the track one level. The time may have come to start thinking about the possibility of engaging in a dialogue, starting with a free exchange of views on the framework of these discussions.

As we review the progress made in the area of arms limitation, disarmament and non-proliferation, our reaction can at best be termed as mixed. While there has been some movement forward in certain areas, there has been little or no progress in others.

The 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) included in its Final Document a number of agreed conclusions and

recommendations related to nuclear disarmament. For the first time ever, with reference to article VI, all the nuclear-weapon States made

> "an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to total nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under article VI". (*NPT/CONF.2000/28, part I, p. 14, para. 15 (6)*)

The Conference also agreed on the need to establish in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. It called for the immediate establishment of such a body. The Conference also called for further efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally and for further reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives as an integral part of the nuclear disarmament process. A call has been made for the engagement, as soon as appropriate, of all the nuclear-weapon States in a process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenal. These elements constitute an important statement of purpose and, if translated into practice, will open the way to practical nuclear disarmament measures.

Mongolia welcomes the ratification by the Russian Federation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and START II treaties, and we look forward to the United States' ratification of the CTBT at an early date. We urge the Russian Federation and the United States to follow up on their earlier announcement regarding the discussions on the START III Treaty.

Mongolia joins the international appeal to the key States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty so that it could be brought into force as soon as possible. The urgency of this call becomes even more compelling in light of the activities that could seriously undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

My delegation also believes that it is important for the Conference on Disarmament, which for several years has been unable to agree on a programme of work, to end its stalemate and to engage in earnest negotiations on an early conclusion of a universal and verifiable fissile materials cut-off treaty. Pending the negotiation of that treaty, we would welcome a moratorium by the nuclear-weapon-States on the production of weapons-grade fissile materials and for greater transparency through disclosure of their present stocks. Better still, we would urge the United Nations to establish a register for all stocks of weapons-grade fissile material. This would help establish an important balance with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

We welcome the decision taken by the United States to postpone the deployment of a national missile defence system. The undermining of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, a cornerstone of strategic stability, could trigger an uncontrollable nuclear arms race.

The growing emphasis placed of late on nuclear weapons in military doctrines is a cause of increasing concern. It is, therefore, only natural that countries like Mongolia favour the adoption of such steps as de-alerting of nuclear weapons, removal of nuclear warheads from delivery vehicles and joint undertakings by the nuclear-weapon powers of a pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. These are essential safety measures that would reduce the risk of unauthorized or miscalculated use of nuclear weapons. In addition, provision should be made for legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear States Parties to the NPT, as has become customary for nuclear-weapon States in signing Protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. In this context, Mongolia welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a major international conference aimed at identifying ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. We hope that this timely proposal will be given serious consideration at this session of the General Assembly, followed by the adoption of a relevant resolution to this effect.

Mongolia shares the legitimate concern of the world community over the global proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are the principal instruments of death wherever conflicts and wars occur. We hope that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, scheduled for 2001, will result in practical measures designed to tighten control, curb the spread and destroy surplus weapons.

As is known, in 1992 Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone; this was widely supported by the international community. Since then we have come a long way. At its fifty-third session the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/77 D entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status". As a follow-up to its declaration,

the Mongolian Parliament adopted a law last February on Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, thus institutionalizing it at the national level. At this session, we expect a joint statement by the nuclear-weapon States to provide security assurances to Mongolia in connection with its nuclear-weapon-free status, which would represent an important step along the road to institutionalizing that status at the international level. I wish to put on record my Government's appreciation to the five Permanent Members for their constructive cooperation and support.

We believe that the aforementioned security assurances would be more credible if Mongolia's other external security issues were duly addressed. In that case, not only would the status be more credible; but it would also allow Mongolia to serve as a positive factor of stability and predictability in the region. In this connection, we certainly share the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report on this item, that consultations with the relevant United Nations bodies will produce concrete and action-oriented approaches to addressing the non-nuclear aspects of security.

In line with the broader approach to security, and on the basis of relevant provisions of the aforementioned resolution, the International Conference on Human Security in a Globalized World, in the context of Mongolia, was held this year with the participation of the United Nations and international experts; it produced detailed recommendations on a wide range of human security-related areas. In many respects, the recommendations of our Conference parallel the spirit and concepts of the Millennium Declaration.

In July of this year parliamentary elections were held in Mongolia, the fourth elections since the onset of democratic reforms a decade ago. The elections were recognized as free and fair by all political forces, as well as by international observers, and served as a testimony of further consolidation of democratic norms and institutions in my country. They proved once again that the embrace of democracy and respect for human rights are an irreversible choice made by the Mongolian people. As a result of the elections, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party won an overwhelming majority of seats in the Parliament. From this high rostrum, I wish to reiterate my Government's robust commitment to the consolidation of democracy and the continuity of reforms. The task of ensuring human security and promoting human-centred development is high on the agenda of the new Government, as envisaged in its action programme. The Government is resolved to ensure sustained economic growth through reinvigorating and encouraging the development of domestic industry, upgrading the living standards of the people by reducing poverty and unemployment and ensuring equitable social and educational opportunities.

The Government of Mongolia will intensify the structural reforms and encourage an export-oriented, private sector-led economy. Mining, the processing of raw materials of animal origin, tourism and other export-oriented sectors are the priority areas of development. The privatization of State assets, including the most valued State enterprises, will continue. The creation of a favourable environment for the attraction of foreign investment is also a priority objective.

I fully share the view expressed in the Millennium Report that success depends to a considerable degree on the quality of governance the country enjoys. Hence, my Government attaches particular importance to enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of public offices and fighting corruption in both corporate and public areas. The Government of Mongolia is determined to cooperate closely with non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society in enhancing the rule of law throughout the country.

In its endeavours to carry out simultaneous economic and political reforms, Mongolia is encountering a multitude of challenges. The eighth meeting of the Mongolia Assistance Group will be held later this year in Paris, and my Government is confident that our foreign partners will continue to extend their generous support and cooperation so as to ease the transition challenges faced by my country.

In pursuing its foreign policy, based on the continuity of a multi-pillar, open and proactive approach, Mongolia will continue to develop and expand its friendly relations with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the principles of good-neighbourliness, mutual benefit and equality. My Government will accord high importance to the further development of bilateral relations with the industrialized nations, including the United States

of America, Japan, other Asian and Pacific countries and members of the European Union. Their political, moral and financial support will continue to play an important role in facilitating our reform efforts. The Mongolian Government will actively strive to strengthen our traditional long-standing relations with Eastern and Central European countries, as well as with the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Africa.

Mongolia will continue its active participation in multilateral processes and international organizations, such as the United Nations, and will spare no effort to ensure that the world Organization remains a focal point for the coordination of the efforts of the community of nations towards peace and development in the years to come.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Comoros.

Mr. El-Amine (Comoros) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the accomplishment of your tasks. Your skill and extensive experience in international affairs convince us that this session will be crowned with success.

I am honoured to take this opportunity to extend our profound appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for his outstanding management of our affairs during the previous session, for his leadership role in the General Assembly and for his spirit of effective cooperation.

We also thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts in the service of our Organization. His wise approach to the important issues and the reforms he is implementing in the United Nations deserve our support and cooperation at all levels.

On behalf of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, I also congratulate Tuvalu on its admission to membership of the United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

Considering the enormous responsibilities of the United Nations in peacekeeping, the defence of human rights and the promotion of social well-being, it is easy to see why, 55 years after its creation, the Organization still has a great deal to do. Given its varied activities, it needs more solid and up-to-date structures that are adapted to contemporary conditions; sufficient and reliable funding; sound, transparent and energetic management; and the ability to carry out its tasks in conformity with current priorities and specific regional concerns. The Millennium Summit further reaffirmed our Organization's essential role in this respect.

That is why the United Nations new organizational plan must allow it to respond to the needs of today's world in the face of major upheavals that inspire intense introspection and consideration. Its reform is also necessary to guarantee sound and reliable structures, with equitably distributed duties, that will confirm its universal nature and ensure better results. Thus, it is particularly necessary to open the Security Council, the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, to other countries, as permanent and non-permanent members, in order to make it more representative and to ensure that its membership and working methods reflect present-day realities.

At a time when the world is evolving and undergoing globalization, the island States and small, poor countries with limited resources are preoccupied by the threat of marginalization looming over them. In addition to the various crises besetting our countries, this state of affairs calls on us to address the urgent need for support, assistance and, especially, awareness of the dangers we are facing.

First are the dangers arising from the immediate and long-term repercussions of the conflicts engulfing the planet, claiming millions of victims, most of them children, women and the elderly.

Secondly, there are the dangers posed to the world by the ever-growing number of acts of terrorism. In this respect, it is important not only to be aware of the potential danger and to find effective means of countering it, but also to draw clear distinctions between and not to confuse the behaviour of people who act in contempt of law and human dignity with that of those who act primarily out of religious considerations.

Thirdly, there are the dangers resulting from flagrant violations of human rights. To combat this problem, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros

gives its full support to the implementation of the International Criminal Court, which should put an end to these abuses. The Republic is preparing to ratify the Statute soon, and it hopes that the implementation of the Court's jurisdiction will be effective.

Fourthly, there are the dangers resulting from natural catastrophes and from the overall degradation of the environment — the increasing vulnerability of which is a source of serious concern for the world. The small land-locked States — developing countries of limited size — are particularly exposed to these dangers. Given the increasing severity of this problem, there is an increasingly urgent need to give priority to protecting ecological systems.

Fifthly, there are the dangers posed by serious diseases from which our populations are suffering — diseases such as AIDS, malaria and many others, extreme poverty included.

Sixthly, there are the dangers posed by the marginalization of the poor countries in the midst of a world undergoing rapid change, a world in which it is hard for these countries to find their way.

Seventhly and finally, there are the dangers to which these same countries are exposed as a result of the external debt burden which absorbs a great deal of their attention and wreaks havoc on their national budgets.

This is to say that in this first stage of our entry into the third millennium, there are many outstanding questions regarding the future of humanity, and these questions require careful consideration. The overall image presented by the world today is a sombre one.

Also, as regards economic issues, it goes without saying that the world is facing a situation that calls for serious examination and for joint action by the development partners to support national, subregional and regional efforts.

In the case of Africa, its overall economic problems are a source of concern because they have become aggravated as a result of the increasingly globalizing world and the great strain that external debt is placing on our economies. Further, it makes sense to be concerned about the future of a continent that has been marginalized, in particular as regards global trade and the information revolution, and afflicted by all kinds of plagues. It is essential that — in addition to the efforts of the individual countries and in the framework of regional integration — the continent benefit from the good offices of the international financial institutions in examining and addressing different problem areas. In this regard, I am pleased to here reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme to fight, alongside our Governments, all forms of underdevelopment.

As a small landlocked developing country and as an African country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros is grappling with these kinds of problems. It cannot be denied that, despite our current situation, our Government is manifesting a firm will in searching for ways and means of lifting the country out of the hole in which it finds itself and of creating favourable conditions for improving the life of our society. The effort under way to clean up the public finances and to revive and restructure the national economy attest to the Comorian Government's determination to improve the socio-economic situation that has prevailed for many years in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros.

Our bilateral and multilateral partners have consistently supported these efforts; however, I need to reiterate the necessity of enhancing this assistance in order to help us meet the challenge of underdevelopment and, above all, to help us avoid falling victim to the perverse effects of globalization.

We should also focus on the political situation of the world, which is today divided by various sorts of wars and crises, which are seriously upsetting the peace and security of peoples. Greater attention should be given to these two crucial objectives — objectives that form the very basis of our Organization — and greater thought should be given to how to vouchsafe them.

This is why, on the subject of wars, I would like to appeal to the goodwill of the parties involved in the problem of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the entire Great Lakes region and to ask them to focus their efforts on démarches that can produce negotiated solutions to the disputes of these parties.

As regards Somalia, my country is greatly pleased by the current happy outcome of the situation there and by the establishment of a transition Government. The Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros hopes that the solid foundations have now

been established so that a lasting peace can be secured for this fraternal country.

In the same vein, the Comorian Government appreciates the efforts made in the holding of the Camp David negotiations and salutes the work of the Government of the United States of America in this regard. The Comorian Government, which has supported and continues to support the Palestinian cause, hopes that these efforts will lead to a speedy resolution of the Middle East crisis — a resolution that will be in the interest of the peoples of that region who have so long suffered from incessant instability. The Comorian Government also believes that any solution to this crisis must include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

Further, we proclaim the necessity of completely lifting the embargo against Libya, and also ask that the embargo against Iraq be lifted. We appeal to the Iraqi Government to cooperate more fully with the efforts to free the Kuwaiti prisoners.

Conflict zones remain in all the continents. The Charter of the United Nations having been written for the peoples, the United Nations must enhance its efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts by peaceful means. In essence this means insisting on the urgent necessity of supporting the cause of world peace, because its absence handicaps all efforts to achieve real sustainable human development.

In this regard, allow me to review the current situation in my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, and to explain how disturbed the people are about the threat to peace posed by the separatist crisis that has been taking place on the sisterly island of Anjouan for close to three years. With the support of the international community — in particular, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States, the European Union, and International Organization of la Francophonie, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference — the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros has explored every means of putting an end to this crisis. The intransigence of the Anjouanese party after the declarations that were made during the inter-island conferences that were held at Addis Ababa and at Antananarivo have led the OAU to take repressive measures against this party — measures that were to be applied in a step-by-step fashion.

The object of imposing the economic embargo against the sisterly island of Anjouan was to lead the Anjouanese to be reasonable. However, the situation has hardly changed, and during this time the lowest levels of Anjouanese society — along with all those who were supporting national unity — suffered terribly from the effects of these measures. Recognizing on the one hand that, given the hardening of the movement's position, this situation was victimizing the population of Anjouan, and particularly the poorest levels, and convinced on the other hand that we Comorians together might be able to come up with a non-military solution, the current leadership of the country, under the enlightened direction of Colonel Azali Assoumani, President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, has insisted on undertaking direct discussions with the Anjouanese party, in the hopes of arriving at national reconciliation.

The attempts at initiating such a dialogue opened the way to the signing of an initial text on 1 July 1999 at Fomboni on the island of Mwali. This text is considered to represent a significant step on the part of the current regime — a step towards harmonizing the opposing points of view.

The negotiations were continued recently, leading to the signing of a joint declaration, again in Fomboni on 26 August. This provides another appropriate framework for preserving the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros, to which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of The Gambia referred on 20 September. Because it allows dialogue to be initiated with our Anjouan brothers on the future Comorian entity, the declaration is of particular significance to Comorians.

The Fomboni declaration makes it clear that the new Commorian entity is the sole subject of international law within the Comorian frontiers recognized by the international community. In order to push ahead with this process, a timetable was established spelling out the various stages leading to the submission to a referendum of the act which is to govern the future Comorian entity.

I should like to make it clear that the Fomboni joint declaration takes account of, and respects, the spirit of the Antananarivo Agreement, which was rejected by the Anjouan party.

Today, more than ever, there is hope that it will be possible to resolve this unfortunate problem by

peaceful means and to lay the groundwork for a democratic State — a Comorian-style democracy, a democracy stemming from the living forces of the nation of the Comoros, without any outside interference or influence. Would it have been just to reject this breakthrough, thus penalizing innocent women and children who have been so sorely tried by the embargo, and then to envisage a military solution? If there had been resort to war in order to have peace, why not avoid it, if possible, and so prevent casualties? The Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros has committed itself to dialogue to settle conflicts, respecting the principles of our Organization.

This wise principle was the basis of the Comorian authorities' approach to their brothers in Anjouan. I therefore appeal for understanding by all our partners who have always supported our efforts to find a negotiated lasting solution to this crisis. This is why, while respecting the position of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and that of all our other partners, I reiterate, on behalf of the Government of the Comoros, our determination to continue this struggle, together with them, in order to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of our country.

The Government of the Comoros pays tribute to the Secretary-General of the OAU, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, for his personal efforts and his efforts through the OAU to resolve this crisis. We also express our wholehearted gratitude to the League of Arab States, as well as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the countries of the region and other friendly countries, including France, for their support.

We earnestly hope that reason has finally prevailed with our brothers in Anjouan and that they have really understood that breaking up the covenant of unity and fraternity which links us and will always link us — Comorians of the four islands of our archipelago State — will not benefit anyone.

We hope that we have all learned the lessons from events which have so seriously affected the country in human, material, psychological and other terms, and that we understand that war will always be a bad master and the worst choice. The process of reconciliation is a demanding task requiring a great deal of resources. In this connection, we make a pressing appeal to the international community to support the programme of reconstruction and national reconciliation which the Comorian Government has drawn up in conjunction with the World Bank.

Faithful to the fundamental principles of the Charter, the Government of the Comoros continues to opt for the policy of dialogue and discussion to resolve all of the problems which confront us. With profound respect for these principles, we appeal to France, with which the Comoros has for long had close ties of friendship and cooperation, to contemplate a direct and constructive dialogue which will make it possible quickly to reach a negotiated solution with regard to reintegrating the Comorian island of Mayotte into its natural community.

As stability, understanding, unity, harmony among our peoples, partnership and progress go hand in hand, creating conditions to guarantee these values would be the best gift which the international community can offer present and future generations on the eve of the next millennium.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

> "If people one day want life
> Fate has no choice but to respond;
> Night has no choice but to yield to dawn
> And shackles cannot but be shattered."

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia): At the outset, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. It is without doubt a fitting recognition of your rich personal experience as well as Finland's role in world affairs.

The Millennium Summit has made it clear that, in the words of the Secretary-General,

> "the United Nations remains as much in demand as in need of change." (*Global Governance 4 (1998), p. 123*)

This is a formidable challenge, but also an opportunity, and the cost of not rising to the new calls of the next millennium can be dangerous.

I cannot but recall that many ideas on globalization and governance generated and debated at the current session echo the concept of "management of interdependencies", put forward by our President,

Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, at the forty-seventh session in 1992. With this in mind, let me address some of those important issues from our standpoint.

The end of totalitarian regimes set in motion a whole host of progressive changes within and among countries. However, we are still struggling with the adverse legacies of totalitarianism. The experience of the post-cold-war era clearly demonstrates that intra-State conflicts have become a major threat to international peace and security. The Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit called for reshaping of the United Nations approach to peacekeeping to meet the challenges of this new global threat. This very idea is particularly topical for the region I represent. As my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Germany, said: "the triangle between Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East" being "full of destabilizing factors ... is threatening to become the crisis region of the century ahead." (*A/55/PV.14*) Therefore, this region merits closer attention by the international community.

In this context, I also endorse the appeal by the Austrian Foreign Minister, in her capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for enhanced political awareness by the world community of these unresolved or potential conflicts and security risks, which she said

> "are often outside the spotlight of broader public attention, but nevertheless have a highly destabilizing impact on the region and beyond."(*A/55/PV.17*)

Periodic failures of United Nations peace efforts, manifested, for instance, in the "ethnic cleansing" of the predominantly Georgian population during the tragic developments in Abkhazia, Georgia, highlighted all the flaws of selective peacekeeping. Well-intentioned United Nations efforts have sometimes been delayed and ineffective in conflicts which the world community regards as peripheral. I believe that we should make every effort to prevent conflicts becoming "frozen".

Consequently, we support the Secretary-General's proposal aimed at implementing necessary changes to increase the effectiveness of United Nations peace efforts in general. I cannot help but call for the more frequent and firm application of the United Nations peace-enforcement mechanisms envisioned in Chapter VII of the Charter, in particular those for coping with protracted conflicts.

The Charter calls for the consent of the parties involved when launching peacekeeping operations or renewing their mandate. However, peacekeeping practices often play into the hands of separatists trying to maintain the status quo. We believe that the United Nations should intensify its efforts to balance the interests of all sides with the dynamics of the peace process and the comprehensive resolution of conflicts. Moreover, we welcome the further enhancement of the United Nations standby arrangement system and the improvement of the Organization's rapid-deployment capabilities.

Georgia also expresses its agreement with the United States initiative to reconsider the scale of assessments and the reallocation of the cost of United Nations peacekeeping. In the context of increasing the effectiveness of United Nations peace operations, this initiative is of great significance.

In addition, complex conflicts, such as that in Abkhazia, Georgia, which has left hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons deprived of the right to return to their permanent places of residence, must be addressed within a multifaceted framework, which entails social and economic approaches, along with political ones.

We are grateful to the United Nations for the invaluable assistance it provides to the refugees and internally displaced persons in Georgia. I also express our special appreciation for the United Nations Development Programme assistance programmes in Georgia, particularly those aimed at improving the living conditions of the internally displaced persons and increasing their self-reliance.

I am stressing the issue of peacekeeping as it is directly related to the most sensitive problem for my country in the past seven years, since it fell victim to aggressive separatism in Abkhazia, Georgia. I reiterate that a peaceful resolution of this conflict is the only acceptable option for the Georgian Government. In this respect, I extend our gratitude to the United Nations and to the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for their efforts in support of the peace process. But we should also admit that so far we have failed to achieve any tangible results here.

Recently, within the United Nations framework and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolution, a document on the distribution of constitutional competences between Tbilisi and Sokhumi has been drafted. We support this initiative and find it difficult to understand what stands in the way of its timely endorsement. We are convinced that submission of the document for consideration by the Security Council should not be delayed; its endorsement by the Security Council as a basis for political negotiations will create a sound ground for advancing the peace process in Abkhazia, Georgia.

Furthermore, I reiterate that about 300,000 predominantly Georgian refugees and internally displaced persons from that conflict zone are still being subjected to the continuous violation of their rights and difficult living conditions. The return of the internally displaced persons to their rightful places of residence is continuously hampered by the Abkhaz side, with blatant disregard for internationally recognized norms, as well as for a number of Security Council resolutions. We strongly believe that there is an urgent need for the Security Council to address those issues in a timely manner.

It has become apparent that at times the United Nations is not capable of handling conflicts on its own. I strongly believe that the key to more effective United Nations peace policies in our region lies in closer collaboration and synchronized action with such regional organizations as the OSCE and other European structures. Regrettably, the reality remains different.

Having established that "ethnic cleansing" was taking place in Abkhazia, Georgia, the OSCE called for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to push forward the peace process. However, the United Nations remains reluctant to accept the OSCE findings. While it is struggling with a variety of approaches, the "ethnic cleansing" of the Georgian population in Abkhazia continues. There is therefore a great need to ensure concerted action by the United Nations and regional organizations in the process of conflict management and resolution.

The dilemma of humanitarian intervention could be described as being inherent to the transition from an international to a global — and, hence, more human-centred — world. It has put in a new light the correlation between human rights and security. We are strong proponents of a value-based, universal global order. Therefore, we are confident that the international community should focus on establishing within this Organization strong and efficient preventive mechanisms, mechanisms to prevent gross and systematic violations of human rights, in order to reduce the likelihood of "humanitarian intervention", an extreme measure. We believe that the International Criminal Court will play an indispensable role in this respect as a deterrent and as a preventive mechanism. The dilemma of "humanitarian intervention" is also directly related to United Nations reform, in regard to adapting the existing decision-making mechanism to the timely and effective use of force.

I believe that the primary purpose of the United Nations as a guarantor of international peace cannot be sustained without also securing democracy on the global level. To set the developing world on the path to prosperity, United Nations activities should encompass purposeful financial, economic and political measures aimed at encouraging the democratic development of the newly independent States, which would secure good governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and predictable administration. Secure democratic development, not merely security of democracies, is the main challenge to be addressed in the course of shaping the global world.

With regard to our region, in the context of support to the new and restored democracies, we consider the initiative of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan to establish an open grouping, known as GUUAM, to be of particular importance. Additional impetus to the manifold cooperation within the grouping was given by the meeting of the heads of the GUUAM States during the Millennium Summit here in New York.

Sometimes in newly established democracies a protracted process towards material welfare calls democratic values into question. One of the most burdensome problems in this respect is debt accommodation. I am confident that it is imperative to release poor and developing countries from this constraint. Writing off the debts will generate a stronger impetus, and create the opportunity for these States to firmly remain on the chosen course of democracy.

We also believe that the all-encompassing process of globalization urgently calls for a dialogue of civilizations as a means of addressing the challenges of

the new millennium, as reaffirmed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) round table that preceded the Millennium Summit. I confirm Georgia's readiness, expressed by President Eduard Shevardnadze, to play an active role in facilitating such a dialogue.

Much has changed in the 55-year history of the Organization, and today the world community is faced with a new type of challenge requiring novel approaches. In the past decade, there have been repeated calls for Security Council expansion. We support the principle of expanding both permanent and non-permanent membership in the Council by developed as well as developing countries to ensure adequate regional representation. We believe that the seat of a non-permanent member should be allocated for the Group of Eastern European States, the number of which has considerably increased. We are firm supporters of permanent membership for Germany and Japan and hope this issue will find its resolution before long.

Georgia welcomes the increased transparency in the Security Council deliberations. We think that each Member State should be permitted to participate in the informal meetings of the Council, when the issues discussed are of concern to them.

Time and again United Nations actions have been ineffective due to protracted decision-making and lack of consensus in the Security Council. Therefore, the reform of the Security Council should encompass its decision-making procedure, including the veto rights as well.

Finally, I would reiterate that the challenges of the next millennium are myriad and complex. And it is crystal-clear that only united can we address the difficulties of the future and overcome the dividing barriers in shaping a new, global world order. I wish to all of us success in this endeavour.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hugo Tolentino Dipp, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Tolentino Dipp (Dominican Republic)(*spoke in Spanish*): Representing and speaking on behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic, which since 16 August 2000 has been presided over by Mr. Hipólito Mejía on the basis of the votes cast by our people for the Dominican Revolutionary Party, we should like to reaffirm our profound commitment to the principles that gave life to this Organization and to the prospect for its further work as we head into a new millennium.

We should like to voice our congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his having convened the historic Millennium Summit on the basis of the report about the role to be played by the United Nations in the twenty-first century, a document which contained an intelligent and pinpointed analysis of the most acute problems of the present and of what is ahead for the international community.

The Dominican Republic is convinced that freedom and equality for all States and for all human beings, without any distinctions whatsoever, constitute the underpinnings for real peace and for harmonious and democratic development of the international community.

The assessment of the world situation drawn up at the Millennium Summit highlighted that notwithstanding the extraordinary scientific and technological strides made, the development in communications media and the rapid expansion of the wealth of some countries, two thirds of mankind live in conditions which prevent freedom and equality from being a common denominator for all the peoples of the earth.

It is all too well known that globalization is not emerging as some magic formula or a panacea to heal wounds, nor as any wondrous invention of the genius of certain sectors of the rich countries.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Globalization is the continuation of a process going back centuries in the history of humankind and something which, unfortunately, on the one hand does contribute to the progress and enrichment of some, but on the other hand still leaves us with a developed and an underdeveloped world. It is precisely because of its unequal effects upon the peoples of the world that at the South Summit of the Group of 77 held in Havana, and at the Millennium Summit which took place in this very Hall, we heard with renewed strength a just call for freedom and equality.

The breadth and the dizzying speed of the changes which globalization has triggered in recent years have stirred the good conscience of humanity,

and, although it appears a paradox, a peaceful rebellion, albeit a distrustful one, is beginning to protest what is seen in all this as just one more form of the traditional domination of the powerful over the weakest.

We peoples that had been colonized, and, having gained independence, had to live in permanent defence of our sovereignty and our cultural identity, have developed the kind of sensitivity that allows us to sort out the real consequences of certain historic processes. That explains how, faced with the effects of inescapable globalization, we have reacted critically, determined not to continue to live on the sidelines and not to accept that we should withdraw, unable to achieve the security of a future filled with hope through the exercise of our free will.

Globalization must be guided by the conviction that the aspiration of a world free from upheaval can be achieved only by an equitable interdependence which can understand that the current imbalances caused by the requirements and conditions imposed by certain bodies can be met by the underdeveloped countries only by the gradual application of free trade agreements and the elimination of the kind of protectionism that stands in the way of the free access of goods and services to the markets of the developed countries.

One single example shall suffice to illustrate the consequences of the indiscriminate opening of the market of an underdeveloped country. In the Dominican Republic thousands and thousands of medium and small-sized companies have gone bankrupt because they could not compete with the avalanche of products from the highly industrialized countries.

Peoples whose asymmetry in relation to the developed countries has been affirmed over centuries cannot and will not be able to adapt to being participants benefiting from globalization if they do not receive the kind of support that allows them to attain economic and social objectives that can contribute to overcoming their current underdevelopment. To talk about globalization and to leave the poor countries to their own devices to make all the efforts necessary to come up to the speed of the wealthy countries is a cruel joke. Globalization must be imbued with an effective spirit of solidarity and social justice. Otherwise, underdeveloped humankind may find itself faced with a new version of the economic voracity that is illustrated in the fable of the shark and the sardine.

We believe that these concerns are all too legitimate and, first and foremost, foresighted. We must not in the future be forced to find a new word for globalization to brand it as we branded the imperial policies of the past.

Globalization is already doing more than give rise to concerns and exacerbate the problems of the poor countries; it also steadily worsens the external debt situation. How many times must we pay that debt? When will we finish paying it? We are convinced that certain aspects of globalization and the consequences of external debt are two sides of the same coin. The indifference to the harm that this ruinous debt burden does to the economies of poor countries makes one doubt the existence of a true spirit of solidarity or a sincere readiness to cooperate. Only forgiving that debt under logical and favourable conditions and through mechanisms guaranteeing effectiveness can give underdeveloped countries the encouragement they need to embark on the path into the new era.

Moreover, current price of oil is a further source of distress for those who depend on it for energy production. This year's oil bill for the Dominican Republic will be more than $500 million, which accounts for some 15 per cent of our national budget. This situation — one shared by many other peoples — demands consideration founded on international solidarity and cooperation.

When we in the Dominican Republic speak of solidarity and cooperation, we cannot but speak of Haiti. Because we are adjacent to that fraternal people, we know how much it needs the generous, sustained support of the international community. As the President of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Hipólito Mejía, said at the Millennium Summit, the Dominican Republic cannot alone bear the present social burden of hundreds of thousands of Haitian citizens. The Dominican Republic therefore wants a solution in which the international community would be an active participant, one that must be based on human rights and that must be implemented in accordance with the norms and principles that must govern a sound migration policy.

But let no one think that we have come here to grumble and to use the General Assembly as a wailing wall. That is by no means true. The Government of the

Dominican Republic is absolutely convinced that it is Dominican society itself that must make the greatest effort to achieve development. Mindful of its responsibilities, therefore, the Government of the Dominican Republic accepts the challenge of globalization, because it knows that the first thing is to address the priorities of development, and because it knows also that its greatest efforts must go towards establishing social justice to resolve problems of education, health, the environment, the equality of men and women, children, eliminating poverty, ending drug trafficking, nutrition and steady improvement in human rights and civil liberties.

Fortunately for many of the world's peoples, developed countries and international bodies largely understand that the point of globalization must not be to unleash market forces and to bring about protectionism, production subsidies and technical regulation, because such obstacles can only contribute to widening the gulf between rich and poor. Those countries and organizations are working together sincerely to ensure that the benefits of this process will be shared through cooperation involving the comprehensive development of peoples. It was in that spirit and with those concerns in mind that the United Nations proposed the 2001 High-level Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development.

The Dominican Republic has strengthened its ties with the Caribbean, with Central America and with other areas of integration, and we are making our contribution to enhance the possibilities for negotiations, access to foreign markets, technology exchanges and cultural enrichment. Moreover, we believe that South-South cooperation is an indispensable complement to growth-oriented programmes undertaken with developing countries.

I turn now to the need to reform the Charter of the Organization. Much has happened since 1945. With undeniable skill, the United Nations bodies of that time dealt with the tasks they faced in the wake of the Second World War. But that was then; now, those bodies do not reflect the realities of a new international community that is larger and more demanding of democratic development.

Reform of the Security Council is imperative; the Dominican Republic considers that it must take place in keeping with the sovereign equality of States, equitable geographical distribution and the varying levels of development of peoples. We are convinced that an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, carried out on the basis of those principles, would enable the General Assembly to play its role as the organ that is truly representative of international democracy.

I turn now the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which was a major event. We hope that the Court will be able to mete out justice not only to heads of State, heads of Government and officials who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes against citizens, but also to those who engage in administrative corruption and theft of State property, something that certainly constitutes a crime in many countries because of the economic and moral harm it causes to their peoples.

Because of the desire of the Dominican Republic to be consistent with the historic tradition of its international relations, it wishes to reaffirm its support for the Republic of China in its logical and just aspiration to rejoin the Organization, of which it was a prominent Member for many years. Here, our position reflects a duty born of conscience, not a position that would diminish the rights that the United Nations has recognized others to have.

Also linked to our historic tradition is the principle of national sovereignty. Since it won independence on 27 February 1844, the Dominican Republic has held the right of self-determination as an unshakeable article of faith. Thus, when there is talk of also enshrining humanitarian intervention as a right, we find ourselves faced with a situation that demands clear-cut and precise definitions. We request this body to devote to this issue the attention it deserves so that all its Members will participate in clearing up such a worrisome matter.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, the Dominican Republic wishes to express its conviction that the dialogue initiated by the Millennium Summit and the positions expressed in the General Assembly will contribute positively to strengthening efforts for peace and brotherhood, which are the essence of the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President: I call on Her Excellency Ms. Paulina García de Larrea, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador.

Ms. García de Larrea (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to convey to the President my congratulations on his election to lead this session of the General Assembly. He represents a country that shares with mine the ideals and principles that favour peace, culture, human rights, solidarity and understanding.

I hail the entrance of Tuvalu into our Organization, and I congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on the skilful and intelligent manner in which the important work of the last session of the General Assembly.

The political events that occurred in the world in the last decade speeded up changes on the international scene, ushering in new global structures and processes. The disappearance of the ideological underpinnings of the cold war produced profound transformations that changed the geopolitical foundations that had prevailed in the twentieth century.

The consolidation of large economic blocs and the technological revolution have had a palpable impact on the pace of economic and social change throughout the world. The free market and the new technologies have favoured competition and have generated the transnational expansion of banking and finance, which has fundamentally changed the way the world economy works.

In this global context, countries are joining the trends of globalization from very different levels of development, and consequently, the opportunities and the effects of these new processes turn out to be extremely unequal. Technological, financial and productive disparities have deepened between the developing countries and the industrialized nations, where most of this potential is concentrated. Notwithstanding the efforts of countries to adapt to and become integrated into a new international environment, inequities have grown and social problems have mushroomed in an environment of deteriorating international cooperation.

The Millennium Summit, which opened this session of the General Assembly, proved to be a historic opportunity to consider in depth the challenges inherent in the new global trends, which are generating a new international order, with its risks and its potential for peace and security, economic growth, sustainable development and human security. It has become clear in the light of these realities that no country can remain on the sidelines or be insulated from the major global changes, and that all States must face the great challenge of working together to regulate the new processes within a universal endeavour to channel the process of development to secure the benefits of globalization, while meeting the needs of the peoples.

Within this context of international responsibility as a priority, the United Nations has a dominant role to play, as a universal forum for States to work together for ideals and objectives common to all peoples and to stimulate international cooperation for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

In the new century, the Organization's potential in world affairs must be fully used. Ecuador trusts in an effective multilateral system whereby global norms for the era of globalization are created in a democratic, participatory and systematic manner. With that objective, the Summit acknowledged the representative nature of the United Nations in the fulfilment of its essential goals, within the framework of the new global processes and the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The interdependence of international political and economic problems becomes significant in this great task, creating a complex mix of matters to be considered on the international agenda of this global institution, the United Nations, which, because of its legitimacy, has the responsibility for adopting coordinated policies and implementing guidelines that ensure the efficiency and timeliness of this Organization's response to events and phenomena occurring in the world that directly affect international security and stability.

I wish to reiterate my congratulations to the Secretary-General on his valuable contribution to the work of this Millennium Assembly through the presentation of his analytical report on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. His thoughts are extremely useful in considering the role and the challenges of the United Nations in the years ahead.

I must also highlight the contribution of the Latin American countries to the work of the Millennium

Assembly through the adoption of the Cartagena Declaration by the heads of State or Government of the Rio Group, and the contribution of the South Summit and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, groups of which Ecuador is a member.

Ecuador shares the view regarding the advantages and opportunities relating to the United Nations influencing the management of international public affairs and cultivating the commitment of all actors to approach the new global processes and structures from the perspective of human development.

Globalization and poverty must be tackled with the priority that their profound consequences for human development require. The trends of globalization today appear merely as an economic process, dehumanized and lacking in social dimensions. This process concerns itself with free trade, competition and new information technologies, without an approach that guarantees that it works for people and that opportunities for progress and the benefits of the process will be distributed worldwide, to all countries.

Ecuador is experiencing one of the most acute crises of its history. Its effects have had a grave impact on State institutions and have led to instability in the process of consolidating democracy. Domestic and foreign factors combined in recent years have contributed to aggravating the crisis through macroeconomic imbalances that have severely battered the economy and people of Ecuador. In this context of enormous difficulties, the conditions Ecuador had negotiated for its foreign debt became extremely difficult to meet. Those factors, together with the adjustment measures taken to confront the crisis, have had a considerable impact on poverty.

This global forum must be aware of the enormous difficulties imposed on highly indebted poor countries both by disproportionate external debt servicing and by the continuing obstacles to their export products, as well as by the fluctuations in the international financial system that work against national efforts to create conditions of economic stability and sustainable development. In meeting its goal of bringing about a just and equitable international order, the General Assembly should find means to reduce the external debt of developing countries, including heavily indebted medium-income countries affected by natural disasters.

Ecuador has made great efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the problem of the excessive burden of foreign debt. Last August it took a first step in renegotiating the Brady debt segment, and it concluded its negotiations with the Paris Club last week. We trust that understanding and above all fairness will mark the continuation of this process so that a definitive solution may be found for the problem of external debt, which is crushing developing countries and hindering the implementation of priority social programmes in the areas of health, education and employment. The restraining effect of debt is undoubtedly one of the main obstacles in the fight to reduce poverty and attain the goals set in this area by 2015.

It is necessary to have an economic and institutional order that provides outlets to countries with small economies, which are the most vulnerable and likely to be affected by extreme crises.

Ecuador, committed to overall national development, resolutely supports United Nations activities implementing financial and technical cooperation in support of countries' national efforts to promote sustainable development in order to bring about a better future for all peoples. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a role in that task as the main operational tool for the efforts of the Organization in support of national plans and priorities to alleviate poverty, contribute to democratic governance and strengthen national capacities for the benefit of human development. I appeal to the international community to ensure that the Millennium Assembly gives resolute political backing to UNDP as the central instrument for the overall management of development in the twenty-first century, and to ensure that the Programme has the financial strength necessary to fully enable it to carry out its operational activities.

The situation of international trade also deserves our priority attention, as it has a direct influence on the economic and social activities of nations. We call for the elimination of trade barriers and obstacles, and demand the application of norms that will make it possible to carry out trade in an open, predictable and equitable way. In accordance with our long-standing tradition of integration, we support the strengthening of the Andean Community and its increased international outreach, in particular with regard to its relations with the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), the European Union, Russia and the Pacific Basin and

in the context of negotiations to create a free trade area of the Americas.

Ecuador shares the international community's concern over the continued degradation of natural resources, the threats to the environment and the inadequate compliance with the commitments made at the 1992 Earth Summit on sustainable development. Given its economic, social and environmental implications, we should insist on the need to give priority to sustainable development as a cross-cutting factor in international relations, with regard both to policies and cooperation. There is an imperative need to incorporate appropriate environmental technologies and to develop sustainable production patterns in order to strengthen national scientific and technological capabilities. The Government of Ecuador has incorporated the concept of sustainable development into its national legislation, promoted the adoption of policies and action plans in that context and strengthened its own environmental authority.

The phenomenon of drug trafficking, with its global effects, is another matter for the international community, as it respects neither borders nor nations and poses widespread dangers to society. Drug trafficking has developed a supranational system in which no particular nation can be viewed as the root cause of the problem. It is essential that we recognize the principle of shared responsibility in coping with the reality of this phenomenon, and that we take the necessary international steps to resolve it. Abiding by this universal commitment, which has already been recognized in the 1988 Convention against Illegal Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, is fundamental in our fight against this global problem, one of the challenges confronting humankind.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, peace, security and disarmament constitute other priority challenges that the United Nations will continue to face. Ecuador advocates the peaceful resolution of international disputes and condemns the threat and use of force in relations between States, as we are convinced that a system of peace and trust among nations must be based on the peaceful resolution of disputes and on specific disarmament measures in the context of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law.

In its pursuit of the goals of peace and security, the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance and restoration of international peace. Ecuador deems it a priority, in terms of the renewal of the United Nations, to reform the Council's composition and methods of work. The Council's mission makes it vital that we correct the current imbalances in the Council's composition, improve its decision-making machinery and lend greater transparency to its methods of work.

Another challenge for the United Nations concerns the role and the strengthening of peacekeeping operations. In recent years humankind has witnessed the exacerbation of regional conflicts and the negative consequences of war in various parts of the globe. It is vital that joint action in the framework of this world Organization be strengthened, so that the use of force, when absolutely necessary, can be applied in strict conformity with Chapter VII of the Charter. In this way the United Nations will be able to retain the international credibility it requires as the legitimate forum for, and agent of, collective action to promote international peace and security.

One of the pillars of democracy in any society is strict respect for human rights, the defence and protection of which are the responsibility not only of each and every State but also of the international community. The international community, therefore, can no longer remain silent or indifferent; it must react, in a legitimate manner, to the massive violations of the rights of entire peoples that were perpetrated in the final years of the past century, which are a source of shame for humankind. Furthermore, it is totally unacceptable for one or more States to seek to represent the international community and to apply, unilaterally and by force, a non-existent "right to interference" on the basis of humanitarian considerations.

In 1998 Ecuador promulgated a national human rights plan with a broad and democratic perspective. The plan, which takes an integrated approach to the human being, was devised and prepared through a nationwide consultative process, with the full involvement of civil society and the public authorities. In this context, the right to development constitutes a legitimate aspiration that must be appropriately and decisively spurred forward by the United Nations.

Ecuador, as a country that is acutely vulnerable to a variety of natural disasters, accords particular importance to the role of the United Nations system in

the prevention, mitigation and reduction of the effects of such disasters, among them the impact of the El Niño phenomenon. In the quest to move forward with research on this phenomenon — which in 1997 and 1998 affected not only the South Pacific region but other areas of the world as well — the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council lent their support to the establishment of an International Centre for the Research of the El Niño Phenomenon, in the city of Guayaquil, in Ecuador. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that my Government, as host country, has taken the steps necessary to proceed with the establishment of that Centre in the next few months, as it is convinced of the scientific contribution that such a United Nations-sponsored instrument can make to humankind.

Ecuador reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism and to the ideals that inspired the founding of the United Nations. The challenges of the twenty-first century must be confronted by all countries jointly and in a spirit of solidarity. The Member States must see to it that this session of the Assembly makes a historic contribution to a universal endeavour to resolve global problems and to strengthen collective security. The achievements of the United Nations in this new century will hinge on a constructive spirit of solidarity on the part of all peace-loving nations.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Rashid Alimov, Chairman of the delegation of Tajikistan.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) *(spoke in Russian)*: Let me join in the congratulations addressed to Mr. Harri Holkeri and to his country, Finland, on his election to the lofty and responsible post of President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish him every success in guiding the work of the Millennium Assembly. I should like to take this opportunity also to express our genuine gratitude and to pay due tribute to Mr. Gurirab for his outstanding diplomatic abilities and for the evident skill with which he guided the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The further the passage of time separates us from the Millennium Summit, the more profoundly will we appreciate its historic outcome. Tajikistan welcomes the recommitment by world leaders to the role of the United Nations as the key mechanism for the collective regulation of international relations.

We remain convinced that there is no alternative to the United Nations. No one actor is capable of dealing single-handedly with the new multifaceted challenges, risks and threats to international security and stability. Only through concerted and collective action on the part of the entire international community can we combat phenomena such as severe financial and economic crises, regional conflicts, international terrorism, organized crime and the illicit drug trade.

The positive results achieved by my country in the implementation of the peace process in our nation are further proof of the key role of the United Nations in coordinating the efforts of States in the process of resolving armed conflict.

Today, after seven years of confrontation, peace prevails in Tajikistan. Following the first multiparty, pluralistic elections in the country's history, held in February 2000, Tajik society is living in a new kind of environment and is laying down a sound foundation for the sustainable democratic development of the country.

The considerable support of the international community, which, under the auspices of the United Nations, effectively promoted the advancement of the peace process in Tajikistan, played a significant part in the establishment of peace and stability in the country. The Tajik people will always remember the United Nations with gratitude and will always associate this Organization with the return of peace, democracy and conditions for sustainable development to our ancient land.

On behalf of President Emomali Rakhmonov, I take this opportunity to express our great appreciation to the Security Council, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, his special envoys and representatives, and the leaders of the United Nations teams and missions in Tajikistan for their enormous contribution to the successful completion of the peace process in my country. Our special appreciation goes to all those States — about 30 — that sent their citizens to Tajikistan as part of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). The Tajik people will for ever keep in their memories the names of those who gave their lives so that peace could return to our country.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Financial Corporation. They have rendered, and continue to render, every possible support to the people and Government of Tajikistan in their efforts to overcome the effects of the civil conflict and to rehabilitate the country's economy.

At all stages of the peace process the Russian Federation made a decisive contribution to its progressive development. The Russian peacekeepers and frontier guards who lost their lives serving security and stability in Tajikistan and Russia will never be forgotten by our peoples.

The guarantor States for the implementation of the peace agreement — the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan — rendered considerable support to the United Nations in achieving the successful settlement of the conflict. The joint efforts of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, neighbouring States, the United States, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and of all those others who sincerely desired to see a peaceful and stable Tajikistan, contributed to the successful implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, signed in Moscow on 27 June 1997.

We are fully aware that a huge job of post-conflict peace-building awaits us. We hope that the United Nations office in Dushanbe will continue to operate effectively, rendering rehabilitation assistance, first and foremost, in the social and economic spheres. Much remains to be done, but what has already been accomplished at this stage is of great significance for the steady, peaceful development of Tajik society and for the entire Central and Southern Asia region.

This is undoubtedly of paramount importance for the United Nations, since it constitutes one of the positive examples of successful activities by our Organization in the maintenance of peace and conflict resolution. We hope that the support for and assistance to Tajikistan needed to reinforce the gains of the peace process will be intensified. We count on the General Assembly's adopting during its current session the traditional resolution, normally adopted by consensus, on humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan.

Large-scale humanitarian assistance is of particular importance this year, because in the spring and summer the whole of Tajikistan was affected by a drought on a scale without precedent in the twentieth century. The loss of grain crops on irrigated land proved to be from 30 per cent to 50 per cent. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), about 3 million people — in other words, every second citizen of Tajikistan — is inadequately fed. We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's appeal for food assistance to the population of Tajikistan most affected by the drought, and we are deeply grateful to the WFP and all donor States that responded so promptly and generously to this appeal.

Clearly, in the new century United Nations activities in the humanitarian sphere, in which it has already demonstrated its capabilities, will continue to play an important role. We believe that it is necessary to intensify the cooperation of Member States in this area in order to increase the international capacity to respond to natural and technological disasters. In our view, this is one of the realistic directions for the development of the Organization, which will allow all to take advantage of the opportunities provided by globalization. This is entirely achievable, once the efforts and capacities of the United Nations and other international economic and financial organizations are united. It would provide a demonstration of the global solidarity called for by the Secretary-General.

Achieving sustainable development and ensuring the equitable consideration of the interests of both present and future generations on a global scale is one of the most serious challenges of the new century. Today we are not far from that boundary beyond which the processes of destruction of the natural mechanisms regulating the environment and global changes become irreversible. Our common objective is to meet the ever increasing needs of human development in the economic and social spheres, while not simply preserving, but gradually restoring natural ecosystems to conditions that will guarantee environmental sustainability.

Much has been accomplished in this area over the last decade. Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio de Janeiro Conference, has become a fundamental document defining the main area of activities of the international

community on this topic. However, the dimensions of the task faced by humanity require extra coordinated efforts. Alongside the long-term problems, such as climate change, the preservation of biodiversity, and desertification, new ones are emerging, demanding careful consideration and concerted action. One is the problem of fresh water, a resource which is being gradually depleted. Depletion of ground waters has become a serious problem. According to some forecasts, by 2050 the population of the planet will not have an adequate water supply. The problem of drinking water is multifaceted and is not confined to purely economic issues.

In "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" the Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that, in order to have a sustainable future, it is absolutely essential that the international community tackle the current fresh water problems. Major concern about this question has been expressed by many non-governmental organizations, as well as by the private sector. It has already been discussed at international conferences, including, at the ministerial level, the Second World Water Forum held in The Hague, the Netherlands last spring, and it will be discussed at the forthcoming International Conference on water problems to be held in Bonn, Germany. All these steps, aimed at giving profound consideration to the matter and elaborating proper coordinated action by the international community, are precisely the purposes served by the initiative put forward by our President a year ago to proclaim 2003 the international year of freshwater. We hope that the relevant resolution will be adopted by consensus at this session. We would be well advised to recall our relationship with the two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen that, bound together in nature, support our lives on earth.

While the twenty-first century may present new trials for humanity, that which recently ended challenged the international community with the urgent necessity jointly to combat international terrorism, the drug trade and organized crime. The situation in many regions of the planet demands that the United Nations mobilize even greater international efforts to counteract these horrible phenomena more actively.

The situation in Afghanistan in particular endangers regional and international security. The inter-Afghan crisis has transformed that country into a stronghold of international terrorism and made it the world leader in drug production. The situation in Afghanistan was recently the subject of a thorough discussion at a meeting of the Group of 6+2, held at the level of Foreign Ministers. Tajikistan is firmly convinced that there can be no military solution to the Afghan crisis; any victory by any party to the conflict will be temporary and will not lead to the establishment of peace and stability in that country.

Only the United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, is capable of untying the tight knot of the Afghan crisis. Tajikistan fully approves of the activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and its Head, Mr. Vendrell. We express our hope that additional resolute measures to be undertaken by the Security Council and the entire international community will eventually allow the fire of war that has raged in that country for 20 years to be extinguished. Otherwise, as we have already seen, the terrorist and narcotic threats to regional and global security emanating from Afghanistan will continue to grow.

Our duty is to help the Afghan people to return to a dignified and peaceful life and to erect a reliable barrier to the heroin-fuelled aggression and the cultivation of international terrorism encouraged by the Taliban, which threaten not only the countries bordering Afghanistan, but also those located far beyond the region. We are convinced that it will become possible to find a formula for peace and a way out of the Afghan deadlock only through our joint efforts and the leadership of the United Nations.

In order to continue playing a key role in world affairs, the United Nations must continuously renew itself. Much has already been done to that end thanks to the important initiatives and effective actions of the Secretary-General. However, a number of issues that could have a real impact on the efficiency of the United Nations in the twenty-first century — inter alia, expanding the Security Council's membership — have yet to be addressed. Tajikistan is in favour of increasing the efficiency, balance and representation of the Security Council by incorporating highly industrialized countries, such as Japan and Germany, and influential developing States into its membership. We hope that this issue will be resolved with the broadest possible support.

Each session of the General Assembly provides us with a unique opportunity to develop a unified approach and to coordinate our actions at the global

level for the sake of a truly democratic, secure and sustainable development of humanity. The Summit of world leaders, unprecedented in the history of mankind, has given our Organization a powerful political impetus with which to enter the twenty-first century. The Millennium Assembly should preserve this momentum and use it rationally for the sake of strengthening the community of nations and our common future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus.

Mr. Kasoulides (Cyprus): I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Holkeri on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am certain that his considerable experience and diplomatic skills will guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the exceptional manner in which he presided over the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Earlier this month, in this very Hall, an unprecedented gathering of heads of State took place — an event that, through the final Declaration, has given new impetus to enhanced international cooperation to tackle an array of international problems. The Millennium Assembly has expressed the strong will of the peoples of this planet for common action so that humanity can proceed with the construction of a better world.

Cyprus reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations, which we have always considered and continue to consider to be the foundation on which the international community can pursue the lofty goals of peace, security, justice, respect for human rights, and social and economic development on a global level. We thus fully support the continuing efforts towards the reform of the Organization, including its principal organs, so that it will be able to successfully face the many international challenges. For, just as all living organisms are constantly evolving in order to adapt and survive in an ever-changing environment, so does the United Nations need always to have the necessary structures and means that will make it as effective as possible.

Cyprus welcomes the efforts of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and we are particularly pleased at the successful conclusion earlier this year of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We would like to congratulate the Russian Federation for its recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the START II Treaty. We consider the expansion of the regime of nuclear-free zones, including one in our region of the Mediterranean, to be an important component in our goal towards a nuclear-free world.

The illicit trafficking of small arms is an issue of grave concern. We are fully supportive of international efforts in this direction and consider more effective action to eliminate this phenomenon to be an imperative need of our increasingly interdependent world.

In countless reports of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the concern is evident regarding the continuing degradation of the environment and the imperative need for global policies in the pursuit of sustainable development. The effects of overpopulation and unregulated development will undoubtedly create new pressures on the environment in this new century. Small island States facing their vulnerability to global warming, rising water level and the increasing scarcity of water resources are particularly concerned in this area. We are particularly pleased with the organization in Cyprus next January of the workshop on energy for sustainable development, a capacity-development initiative of the Alliance of Small Island States. We expect this workshop to make a substantive input to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The effects of globalization were extensively discussed by world leaders at the Millennium Summit. I will therefore limit myself in this statement to only one aspect of the whole question of the impact of globalization, which we consider a major problem that we all have an obligation to address. The eradication of poverty is undeniably one of the major challenges that the international community faces. It is imperative that new and imaginative policies to attack the problem be developed, with the Member States of the United Nations and the major international financial

institutions working in close cooperation on this issue. Debt relief should be a central part of these efforts.

The progress achieved since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted more than half a century ago, has been considerable. The international regime of human rights instruments has been continually expanding and constitutes the criterion against which the international community and national Governments are judged as to their dedication and actions in the protection of human rights. The United Nations has been at the forefront of these new winds of hope for humankind. The subject of human rights today encompasses a variety of topics. We are very pleased at the successful conclusion of the special session of the General Assembly on women and the follow-up conference on social development, which were held earlier this year in New York and Geneva respectively. We look forward to continuing on this path at the upcoming world conference on racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and at the special session of the General Assembly on children.

One of the areas of particular concern to Cyprus is the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons throughout the world. Cyprus has itself experienced the tragic consequences of mass displacement and ethnic cleansing. The vast majority of displaced people — more than 22 million people, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — are women and children, who are particularly vulnerable to gross violations of their human rights. We strongly believe that the international community has an obligation to more forcefully secure the right of return of these refugees to their places of residence.

Cyprus welcomes the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon in accordance with resolution 425 (1978)of the Security Council. We would like to consider this as a harbinger of the achievement of a comprehensive solution to the Middle East question. Despite the temporary setback in the Israeli-Palestinian final-status negotiations, we believe that the process can and should move forward, so that peace, stability and prosperity will finally be established in this long-tormented region. Cyprus supports the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council in this respect.

Cyprus fully supports Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and calls for the full respect of the human rights of all the inhabitants of Kosovo, irrespective of their origin, as well as for the full respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the democratic process of all States in the region. We also commend the European Union for its considerable initiatives and support for the economic and political stabilization of South-Eastern Europe.

We have been encouraged by the positive climate that has existed since the June meeting between the North and South Korean leaders. We express our support for further measures to achieve reconciliation, stability and cooperation in the Korean peninsula. We have been heartened by the prospect of reunification and of the termination of the division in this sensitive region.

Cyprus fully supports the process for the establishment of an international criminal court and was one of the original signatories of the Rome Statute. We look forward to further progress in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court and welcome the results of its last session regarding the consensus reached on the rules of procedure and evidence and the elements of crime. Our support stems from our firm belief that if we are to live in a world where justice and international law prevail, then impunity for abhorrent crimes against humanity should end immediately. Cyprus, itself a victim of such crimes, knows very well the bitter truth of impunity.

For the last 26 years the General Assembly has included in its agenda the question of Cyprus. Decisions by this Assembly, in particular resolution 3212 (XXIX), as well as successive Security Council resolutions, call for the restoration of the territorial integrity, unity and independence of the Republic of Cyprus and the withdrawal of the Turkish troops and settlers from an independent country, Member of the United Nations, which was invaded in 1974 and whose territory, 37 per cent of it, is controlled by the Turkish occupation army.

An attempt has been made from this rostrum to give a different version from and interpretation of the one upheld and understood by this General Assembly and by the Security Council. When one talks about the events of 1963, one should not forget the armed insurgency against the legal Government of the Republic and the deliberate decision of the Turkish Cypriot leadership to withdraw its representatives from Parliament and the organs of the Government, in order

to pave the way for the present de facto division of the island.

Furthermore, it is well known and confirmed by the three reports of the European Commission of Human Rights, following appeals by the Republic of Cyprus against Turkey, that ethnic cleansing occurred in Cyprus in 1974 with the violent uprooting of one-third of the Cypriot population from their homes and their expulsion from the areas that are now under Turkish occupation. This is a classic example of a creation of faits accomplis through the use of force.

Enough has already been said about history, and many recriminations were levelled by one side against the other. We have said time and again to our Turkish Cypriot compatriots, and we repeat to the Government of Turkey, that it is high time we looked to the future. A future bright and prosperous for all Cypriots, permeated by a spirit of reconciliation, in a peaceful, demilitarized and reunited Cyprus, member of the European Union, in which all Cypriots would live in conditions of peace, prosperity and the full protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We want a future without occupation armies, without barbed wires of division and without human suffering. Indeed, how can one seriously claim that the massive Turkish military force which invaded and has continued to occupy 37 per cent of Cypriot territory for the last 26 years is a force of pacification and liberation? Had these forces been pacification or liberation troops, as Turkey tries to portray them, would the Security Council, which represents the collective wisdom of the international community, call repeatedly for their withdrawal? Moreover, how can anyone, speaking before this body, describe United Nations resolutions and their call to uphold and adhere to international law as romantic descriptions and unrealistic assessments?

One further point that I would like to make is the reference to the so-called realities in Cyprus. We have been asked to accept, if we want to find a solution, these so-called realities on the ground. These realities are, of course, the result of the Turkish invasion and its dire consequences on the people of Cyprus. One such stark reality reflecting the ultimate aims of Turkey in Cyprus is the importation of 98,000 Turkish mainland settlers into the occupied areas in an effort to change the demographic structure of the island. Another reality is the mass emigration of our fellow Turkish Cypriots from the occupied areas and the constant threat posed by the 36,000 Turkish occupation troops stationed on the island. This threat is real and manifests itself from time to time through provocative actions on the ground. Such is the case of the Turkish advance in Strovilia, following the adoption last June of a resolution by the Security Council renewing the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). This illegal action has been described by the United Nations Secretary-General as a clear violation of the status quo. The inability of the Organization to return the situation to the status quo ante tarnishes its image and credibility. Could one imagine the consequences for international relations, when nations are forced to accept solutions based on faits accomplis created and sustained through the use of military force and unilateral acts? Can we allow such a precedent to pave the way for the disintegration of so many countries around the globe? What, indeed, would be the consequences for small States in this kind of so-called international order, where international law is selectively applied and the will of the mighty reigns supreme?

The one and only reality is the imperative need for peace and reconciliation in Cyprus through a mutually acceptable solution within the parameters of United Nations resolutions. We are currently engaged in the fourth round of proximity talks. We have come to these talks with flexibility and with the political will to reach a solution as prescribed by this Organization. We appeal to the Turkish side to seize the moment and capitalize on the current favourable environment in order to reach a comprehensive settlement. Such a settlement will be based on Security Council resolutions, which call for a bi-zonal, bi-communal Federal Republic of Cyprus, with a single sovereignty, citizenship and international personality, comprising two politically equal communities, as described in Security Council resolution 750 (1992). The Turkish side must realize that a solution must be mutually acceptable and based on international law, and it must not insist on imposing its will and on a solution based on faits accomplis.

Our common aim should be a solution that would be honourable and something to be cherished by future generations of all Cypriots, Greek and Turkish alike, to whom our utmost purpose is to bequeath a better place to live in harmony, tolerance and cooperation.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia, His Excellency Mr. Masao Nakayama.

Mr. Nakayama (Micronesia): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Pacific Island Forum group of countries at the United Nations, comprising Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Micronesia.

It is with pride that I congratulate and extend a warm welcome to our Pacific Island neighbour Tuvalu into the United Nations family. The members of our group may vary greatly in land and ocean areas, population, resource endowment, economic development, social structures, languages and cultures, but we share a common goal for the Pacific, based on security and stability, as well as prosperity and economic opportunities for its peoples, and the sustainability of resources. Within the same context the Pacific Islands Forum countries represented in New York reaffirm their commitment to play a supportive role in the United Nations decolonization programmes in respect of the remaining non-self-governing territories in the Pacific.

The Pacific Ocean occupies a central place in the lives of the people of the Pacific Islands. Preservation of this resource — which contains the world's highest marine diversity — is critical to our future economic development. The vast oceanic area under the control of our members is rich in fishing potential but requires careful management and monitoring to address illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and other environmental threats. A major achievement for us and our distant-water fishing partners is the convention recently adopted by the Multilateral High-Level Conference on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific, which will protect the world's last great tuna fishery.

The first meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea, under the co-chairmanship of the Ambassador of Samoa, promises to serve as a vital part of the preparatory process for the General Assembly's consideration of ocean issues. The ocean priorities identified by the Pacific Island Forum include ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the United Nations agreement on fish stocks; marine scientific research and technical assistance; and the delimitation of maritime zones, including continental shelves.

The world's security environment has become more fluid and uncertain with new and emerging threats. Events this year show that a reputation for stability and peace are by no means guaranteed in the Pacific. In light of the political crisis in Fiji and the social unrest in the Solomon Islands, Foreign Ministers of the Forum met in Samoa in August. They recognized the need for regional action to be taken on the basis of all members being part of the Pacific Islands extended family. In doing so the Forum must demonstrate that it is prepared constructively to address difficult and sensitive issues, including the underlying causes of tensions and conflicts, such as ethnicity, socio-economic disparities, lack of good governance, land disputes and erosion of cultural values. Accordingly, they decided to recommend to the Pacific Island Forum meeting in Tarawa, Kiribati, that leaders commit themselves and their countries to a number of fundamental principles and courses of actions, including the following: belief in liberty of the individual under the law, equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed, political belief and in the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of a free and democratic political process in framing the society in which he or she lives; upholding democratic processes and institutions which reflect national and local circumstances, including the peaceful transfer of power, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government and recognizing the importance and urgency of equitable economic, social and cultural development to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of the people of the Forum.

The ministers established a working group to develop these principles, and options for action in cases where the principles have been violated, for consideration by Forum leaders when they meet in Kiribati.

In addition to increasing incidents of civil unrest, the region is facing new threats from international, financial and cyber crime and people-smuggling, as

well as the challenge of preventing and controlling communicable diseases and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The threat associated with uncontrolled access to even a small number of weapons was brought into stark relief in the region recently, adding weight to the Forum leaders' decision in 1997 to put in place regional cooperation and a legal framework to control the spread of weapons in the region. This approach is in step with international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms, particularly in the lead-up to the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Work on a legal framework has progressed to a point where we expect draft legislation to be circulated among Forum island countries before the end of this year.

We in the Pacific retain a close relationship, in both economic and cultural terms, with our natural environment. We therefore maintain a keen interest in the development of the Environmental Vulnerability Index. We thank the several Governments that have kindly committed substantial funds for the completion of the third phase of the studies being conducted by the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), and encourage its adoption by the United Nations so that the environmental and natural risks that our members face are recognized when consideration is given to eligibility for concessional aid, trade treatment and least-developed-country status.

Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States remain the basic guideline for protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development. Steady progress is required in the preparations for the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, to take place in 2002. We give high priority to international efforts to have the Kyoto Protocol come into force at the earliest possible date. We are thus committed to achieving a successful outcome to the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in November. We welcome the formulation of specific tools, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, which promise to be useful in enabling island countries to do our part to combat climate change and to adapt to its consequences within the parameters of our own national circumstances.

Strengthened efforts are being made in the region to build capacity to understand and respond to climate change, including through observational networks. The small island nations of the Pacific face unique constraints on development. Most have small subsistence-based economies with a narrow export base. Forum economic ministers meeting in July reconfirmed their commitment to the process of economic reform, based on the principle of good governance, with the aim of providing a sound economic basis upon which social development can take place.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) remains the world's most significant international opportunity for the negotiation of trade and commercial issues. The Pacific Island Forum has agreed to establish a Forum delegation in Geneva and a working group of Forum trade officials to improve cooperation in the WTO and to actively engage in the policy debate about the best way to enhance the role of the WTO in contributing to development. We recognize the importance of finding ways to ensure that trade reform delivers outcomes which will contribute not only to economic growth, but also to the advancement of development and social equity objectives and improved environmental outcomes.

The global information economy promises great opportunities, particularly for those in isolated areas such as the Pacific, but it also demands new skills and technology. Efficient and effective communications services, including a dedicated modern network system like the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET), are of critical importance in achieving economic and social development and overcoming the constraints resulting from the relatively high cost structures of telecommunication networks for Forum island countries. A Forum vision for the Pacific information economy seeks to develop an appropriate mechanism for the cooperation of regional regulators and relevant organizations. Education and training are of fundamental importance to enhancing the adaptability of Pacific islanders to economic reform in a rapidly changing world and region. By supporting education, the United Nations can help overcome one of the major obstacles to economic growth and poverty reduction.

The United Nations system continues to play a vital role in protecting the interests of small island States, such as most of the members of the Pacific

Island Forum. It is essential that the United Nations remain strong by adapting to meet new challenges such as globalization. At the same time, the central role of the General Assembly, with its universal membership, should be strengthened. The Security Council should be made more representative, transparent and democratic so as to be able to respond to the requirements of a fundamentally different international setting. It needs to be reformed comprehensively to meet contemporary demands and the conditions of the world today.

We welcome the Brahimi report (A/55/305) and look forward to the strengthening of the ability of the United Nations to carry out its key peacekeeping role. To fulfil its collective security responsibilities, the United Nations must be afforded strong and sustained political support, together with financial and institutional resources. An integral element is a more equitable scale for determining peacekeeping funding.

The Pacific Island Forum group remains committed to ensuring an effective United Nations.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/55/3, which contains a partial programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings and which has been distributed in the Hall. This schedule was prepared to facilitate the organization of the work of delegations and to help ensure that the relevant documentation is ready for the discussion of the respective items.

I will, in due course, announce the dates for the consideration of other agenda items, as well as keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes. This information will also be indicated in addendums to document A/INF/55/3.

I should like to remind members that the list of speakers for agenda item 10, "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", is already open. The lists of speakers for other items cited in document A/INF/55/3 are open.

In addition, I should like to announce the following activities. The 2000 United Nations/Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Pledging Conference for the World Food Programme will take place in the afternoon of Wednesday, 1 November. The 2000 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities will be held in the mornings of Wednesday and Thursday, 1 and 2 November.

The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 2001 programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will take place on Friday, 10 November, in the morning. The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 2001 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will take place on Monday, 4 December, in the morning. Members are requested to consult the Journal for the announcements on these activities for further details.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.27

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): My delegation greets and congratulates you, Sir, for presiding over the deliberations of the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly — the Millennium Assembly.

We pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the distinguished Foreign Minister of Namibia, for his effective and dynamic conduct of the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, including the preparations for the Millennium Summit and the President's Report.

Congratulations are also extended to our distinguished Secretary-General, who with great vision conceptualized the Millennium Summit, the execution of which was a great triumph for the United Nations.

A hearty welcome is extended to the small sovereign State of Tuvalu, as it joins the family of nations.

The Millennium Summit and this fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly are historic events that provide a unique opportunity to view humanity's progress and face the challenges before us.

Indeed, the Summit Declaration sets out a global vision for the twenty-first century. My delegation welcomes the inclusion of commitments to fight poverty, disease, ignorance, injustice, violence and degradation of the environment, among others.

In the matter of poverty and disease, the United Nations must address the inequalities that exist around the world. In this twenty-first century, more than 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day. Millions of children and the elderly go to bed hungry. Disease and sickness wreak havoc on the lives of children, men and women. Today the HIV/AIDS pandemic cuts short the lives of millions of people who could be making useful and productive contributions to our world.

Trade is vital to the livelihood of Grenadians. For the banana-exporting countries of the Caribbean subregion, which includes Grenada, the export of bananas accounts for a significant percentage of foreign exchange. However, our economies are threatened by the callous ruling of the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the European Union banana regime of assistance to our small growers.

Our struggling farmers, with limited acreage, find it difficult, if not impossible, to compete with a transnational corporation. Our farmers need an adjustment period in order to effect the requisite structural changes needed by the new trade regime. We look to the United Nations to call upon the WTO to take into consideration the special structural problems faced by the small banana producers of the Caribbean.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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We call for corporate responsibility. We appeal for measures to encourage the sustainability of small economies and economies in transition. We urge a more equitable global partnership.

You may recall that the Heads of State and Government, including the Prime Minister of Grenada, stressed recently in this very hall the urgency of releasing poor developing countries from their debt burden. The leaders expressed an interest in finding new approaches and new thinking with respect to this problem. A solution should be vigorously pursued with deliberate speed.

Debt forgiveness is not a financial loss to the global economy. Rather, it provides an opportunity for stimulation in the depressed and stagnant parts of the world's economy. Investing the dividends realized by debt forgiveness in the economy of the debtor developing countries — especially the least developed and those with economies in transition — would be a major investment in global development.

Another area that needs urgent and immediate assistance from the international community is that of natural disasters. The costly restoration of infrastructure and rehabilitation of the productive sectors, especially agriculture and tourism, and the high cost of recovering and rebuilding make the attainment of sustainable development a monumental task.

My delegation calls upon the United Nations and its agencies, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international agencies, as well as the private and public sectors in global partnership, including the Global Compact, to contribute to a well-structured disaster relief fund, a relief fund that can respond quickly and effectively.

A large percentage of the needs of the developing countries in the Caribbean subregion and elsewhere can be met. We look forward to positive developments envisaged from globalization, trade liberalization, information technology and sustainable development. These and other well-conceived programmes must be seriously pursued. Lip service is not enough.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report to the fifty-fifth General Assembly on the work of the Organization: "To some, globalization is imbued with great promise; to others, it appears deeply threatening." (*A/55/1, para. 13*)

The international community must help to ensure that the have-nots are on board this fast-moving train of globalization. All Member States need to share in the opportunities provided by globalization. This would act as a vehicle for international peace and economic security.

Removing some of the barriers to trade and capital flow are prerequisites to successful reduction of poverty and disease in the developing countries. This can be mutually beneficial to developed and developing countries.

Trade has been the engine of economic growth and development from the days of bartering to the present day of e-commerce and globalization. We therefore regard the unilateral interference in our offshore services sector as an attempt to hinder our trade in services and our role in the global economy.

In that connection, my delegation recalls the words of my Prime Minister about the unfair charges levelled against our offshore financial-services sector.

> "A cartel of high-tax nations, comprising the richest and most powerful countries, has launched a destructive and high-powered attack on our country, accusing us of anti-competitive tax practices. Threats, imperialistic pressures and abuse of power in multilateral organizations are being used to force many small States, including Grenada, to give up our fiscal sovereignty. They have used adverse publicity techniques deliberately to condemn and harm our economies. They have threatened various sanctions, sought to block access to capital funds in multinational organizations and to impose financial protectionism and total ostracism."

That is fiscal imperialism. It tramples on the principle of sovereign equality. It is contrary to international law, and it undermines freedom of competition, global investment and trade liberalization.

The role of education in poverty alleviation, in the application of science and technology and in the vast area of information sharing and communications is vital. The Government of Grenada, recognizing the social, cultural and economic potential of education, is investing an increasing proportion of its limited resources to prepare its people to participate in, and benefit from, the information and technology revolution. Towards that end, the Government of

Grenada is seeking the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and agencies and donors of goodwill to establish a new programme of distance learning by means of global computer interconnectivity.

Grenada attaches great importance to the convening in 2001 of the United Nations High-level Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development. My delegation welcomes the attempt to address monetary, trade and financial issues in a holistic manner and in the context of globalization and sustainable development. The international community should not miss this opportunity to focus attention and resources on the pursuit of development, peace and stability.

And here, my delegation reaffirms that the root cause of conflict within nations and among nations can be found in some of the injustice done to the weaker members of the international community by the stronger ones. Unless the basics of life — food, clothing, shelter, health and employment — are attained, human rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be meaningless to those who suffer such extreme deprivations. This is especially so in the context of economic, social and cultural rights, which are downplayed in favour of civil and political rights. Since all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, attention to the full range of rights will contribute better to the observance and enjoyment of this noble goal.

I join my Prime Minister in paying tribute to, and publicly thanking, the Government and the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan for the assistance given to Grenada with respect to agriculture, marine resources, education, health, culture and infrastructure. The friendship and sincerity of the Republic of China on Taiwan have been a source of strength and endurance for our two countries. It is in this spirit that Grenada calls once more for the return of the Republic of China on Taiwan to full membership of the United Nations. A people that diligently works to achieve such high levels of human and technological development and a people that makes such positive contributions to the global economy must become a full Member of this great organization, the United Nations.

Finally, we must seek to ensure that the Organization is responsive to the ever-changing global environment. Let us ensure that we address the needs of our peoples. And let us move forward with a United Nations that is prepared to fuel the engine that would bring about more equitable participation in the global community. Let us always put people first and be guided by God.

The President: I now give the floor to the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullah.

Mr. Abdullah (Afghanistan): On my way to the Assembly Hall, I was informed by the Supreme State Council of the Islamic State of Afghanistan that in a self-evident act of aggression hundreds of Pakistani military personnel — army, plain-clothes personnel and armed Taliban — are reported to have been positioned in the Shah Salim pass dividing the Pakistan border town of Chitral from north-eastern Afghanistan, bound for an attack on Badakhshan province.

On behalf of my delegation, I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the major task of presiding over the important millennium session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his excellent leadership of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, which set the stage for the Millennium Summit.

Three years ago, I stood before the Assembly and stated from this very rostrum that, as the crisis in Afghanistan continued to unfold, we had to ask, and answer, important questions. At the time, I spoke of the dark and ominous movement known as the Taliban, which, backed by cross-border troops, had invaded Afghanistan. This year, at its millennium session, the General Assembly indeed has to answer major questions. One among many is the silence the world has chosen to keep in dealing with the Taliban and their Pakistani supporters. With the spread of Talibanism, which has led to the abject misery of the Afghan nation, massive insurgency and turmoil in the region and beyond, is it not high time that the international community put a stop to the Pakistani-operated Taliban processing machine? Certainly, mere rhetoric and inadequate reactions are not enough. It is with this view that I should like to focus my statement entirely on the situation in Afghanistan and its devastating regional and international implications, within the given time limit.

A question arises: what has been the result of the Talibanization of the occupied parts of Afghanistan? In an age of information and globalization, it has been a reign of terror imposed by a religious police, abuse in the name of religion, the elimination of all freedoms and civil liberties, massive violations of human rights, degrading and tormenting treatment of men and women, trafficking of women and girls, the forced separation of women from their menfolk, the random and deliberate round-up of individuals based on their ethnic and religious origins, the practice of scorched-earth policy, the torching and total obliteration of farmlands, orchards and other means of livelihood, the contamination of water resources, the forcible dispatch of children and adults to the battlefields, the removal of all but rudimentary religious education — for male students only — with the closure of all schools for females, the deliberate denial of access to humanitarian aid, the intensification of battles, an exacerbation of the situation, widespread terrorism and the destruction of the historical heritage and artefacts of Afghanistan in order to alienate the Afghan nation from its ancestry and historical identity.

The objective of the Pakistani military intelligence establishment, known as Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), through the imposition of the so-called Islamic Emirate of the Taliban, has been to create instability in Central and South Asia by means of terrorism. This "Islamic Emirate" has instituted Mullah Omar, the militia's leader, as the undisputed Amir-ul-Mo'mineen, meaning "Commander of the faithful" not only in Afghanistan, but in theory throughout the Muslim world.

The process the Pakistani military intelligence has chosen for the realization of its objective is to transform the Afghan nation into an exhausted, devastated, illiterate, ignorant and destitute nation struggling hard for mere survival. Pakistan wants to turn Afghanistan into its false front to mask illicit activities of narcotics trafficking, terrorism and other crimes, as well as religious extremism, by establishing centres and bases for such activities. Attempting to act as the champion of the Muslim world, Pakistan continues to carry out these activities under the name of Islam. It is therefore not a matter of astonishment that such activities have led to the defamation of both the noble religion of Islam and the image of Muslims throughout the world.

In short, the Afghan nation has become the direct victim of the diabolic dreams of the Pakistani military's hegemonic interests in the region. These diabolic dreams are pursued by the Pakistani military intelligence, ISI, an evil and extremist institution, while the implied risk and perilous consequences for the very survival of Pakistan as a State in the future are overlooked.

As the world is gradually awakening to the creeping Taliban threat, it is a matter of dismay that some "civilized" nations, on certain occasions, have preferred to deal with the reclusive and defiant Taliban, an entity which has failed to meet the minimum standard of being considered civilized, while having championed terrorism, human rights violations and crimes against humanity. It is no surprise that only Pakistan's military junta has continuously given its full blessing to the movement.

At least until early May of this year, the official position of Pakistan, from what its diplomats and officials strangely claimed, was that it maintained contacts with both parties to the conflict. However, Pakistan's News Network International (NNI) news agency reported on 25 May 2000 that General Pervez Musharraf claimed that Pakistan's pro-Taliban policy was "in accordance with Pakistan's national interest." Advocating that Pashtoons should be on the side of Pakistan, the General was quoted as saying, "We have a national security interest, both demographic and geographic." He further stated that in the realization of this security interest, "Pashtoons should be on our side and they", meaning Pashtoons, "are represented by Taliban."

The world must know that in a flagrant violation of recognized international norms and principles and in clear contempt of the United Nations Charter, the ruler of the Pakistani military junta, under the outrageous pretext of national security interest, has claimed the right to impose a certain ethnic group through the invocation of an ethnically provocative mandate at the cost of the sovereignty and political independence of Afghanistan, a Member of the United Nations and, prior to that, of the League of Nations, long before Pakistan was even born.

It is important to remember that terrorist training camps operating from the Taliban-held territories of Afghanistan, including those established by the infamous Osama bin Laden, whose dismantling has

been repeatedly called for by the United Nations and the entire international community, have been established by Pakistan's military intelligence through the Taliban mercenaries and other extremist networks. They continue to utilize these territories as a ground for training, sheltering, planning and dispatching elements seeking to commit hostile acts against countries of the region and beyond. This is done under the guise of Islam, but, in fact, it is mainly in pursuit of Pakistani hegemonistic objectives directed towards Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. Recent events and activities by extremist groups in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are manifest examples of the spillover of the Pakistan/Taliban-supported agenda in the region.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan believes it is high time that the Security Council, in accordance with relevant resolutions, undertook appropriate enforcement measures against Pakistan, which is the prime source of sponsorship of these activities.

The Security Council, in its unanimously adopted resolution 1267 of 15 October 1999, explicitly demanded that the Taliban mercenaries refrain from sheltering, supporting and training terrorists and planning terrorist acts from Afghan soil against other countries and that it extradite to the requesting States those indicted for committing international acts of terrorism.

The recent upsurge of terrorist activities in Central Asian countries and beyond, emanating from the Taliban-occupied parts of Afghanistan, requires drastic measures by the Security Council against the militia and its Pakistani supporters. The consideration of the imposition of further targeted sanctions and the expansion of the scope of resolution 1267 (1999), which must include the end of terrorist activities in all forms and manifestations in the Taliban-held parts of Afghanistan, could adequately, among other things, serve the cause of peace and security in the region.

Here I would like to welcome the proposal by the Republic of Uzbekistan for convening an international conference, at the earliest possible time, to debate the evil phenomenon of terrorism.

In spite of the current devastating drought in Afghanistan — the most severe in 30 years — Afghanistan remains the leading producer of narcotics. The production of illicit drugs, and their trafficking by the Taliban and the politico-military mafia of Pakistan, account for considerable revenue, which is used to finance the prolonged war in Afghanistan. This leads to considerable transnational organized crime, while adding to the number of addicts, both at home and abroad.

Among the many deliberate violations and instances of absolute disregard for international humanitarian law and the numerous crimes against humanity committed by the Taliban and their outside supporters in the year 2000, one could mention the following cases: the cold-blooded killing on 11 May of 198 young Uzbek and Hazara men imprisoned as hostages in Taliban jails; the brutal killing on 5 August of the United Nations mine-clearance employees affiliated with the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation; the deliberate denial of access to humanitarian aid that, according to the European Union, in the light of the devastating drought constituted a breach of international humanitarian law; the forced blood-drawing and organ removal of innocent civilians along the Tagab-Nijrab route in August; the forced deportation of the civilian populations of the city of Aibak on 31 July 2000; the closing down in August, as part of the ongoing four-year campaign by the Taliban to keep women from working, of all bakeries run by the United Nations World Food Programme in which widows were paid to make bread that was then sold at a subsidized price to other widows, who number at least 25,000 in Kabul alone; the indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilian neighbourhoods at Taloqan on 15 August; and the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of people throughout the north due to renewed Taliban military onslaughts.

We believe that the commission of those heinous crimes by the Taliban militia was largely attributable to the lack of adequate response by the Security Council and the international community to bring to justice the perpetrators and others involved in incidents at Bamyan in 1997, at Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamyan in 1998, in the north of Kabul in 1999, and in the killings of Iranian diplomats, a journalist and the military adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) in 1998.

It is significant to note that the Taliban continue to deprive women of their fundamental rights, including the right to education, which affects over 100,000 female students in Kabul alone. Women are still barred from employment by the Taliban. While the predictable results will speak for themselves, present

and future female generations of Afghanistan will be illiterate. The cultural and social impact of that criminal act on the country's future generations will be enormous.

Pakistani military intervention in Afghanistan is a fact well known to the international community. The hundreds of Pakistani prisoners captured while fighting alongside the Taliban and now in the custody of the Government; the mortal remains of hundreds of Pakistanis in the battlefields and the documents and identification cards obtained from their pockets; the intercepted radio transmissions; and the massive logistical support and the overt supply of large quantities of military hardware and ammunition, all prove the direct involvement of Pakistani army personnel in Afghanistan. In fact, Brigadier General Rustam of Pakistan's armed forces, who is currently stationed in Afghanistan's Kunduz province, commands the Pakistani-Taliban-bin Laden operations in the north. He has been assisted by two of bin Laden's henchmen, Abu Wara and Hubab. All of them were involved in the recent occupation of Taloqan and in the atrocities committed against the civilian population. It is important to mention that the November/December issue of Foreign Affairs magazine has estimated the total number of Pakistanis having fought in Afghanistan since 1994 to be in excess of 80,000.

A breakdown of Pakistani nationals fighting in Afghanistan include the following: Pakistani armed contingents, including units from the North-West Frontier Corps and different commando units, have actively participated in battles on various occasions; Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) officers involved in the planning and command and control of both intelligence operations and logistical support; ex-commissioned officers in charge of tactical operations, artillery support and logistics; frontier militia units; paramilitary members of extremist terrorist groups affiliated with the ISI, such as the Sipah-e-Sahaaba, the Sepah-e-Tayeba, the Harakat-ul-Ansar and so on; and the so-called volunteers from Pakistani madrassas, or religious schools.

Other categories of foreign fighters in Afghanistan include Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group and its affiliated units from around the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and Africa, and extremist groups from Central Asia, South Asia and the Far East. In addition, thousands of Afghan refugees who were educated and trained in Pakistani religious schools are dispatched to the battlefronts of Afghanistan. Finally, there are conscripted and forcibly recruited persons from around Afghanistan who are deployed as canon fodder.

In this context, the Islamic State of Afghanistan appeals to the Security Council to mandate the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to dispatch an investigation team to Afghanistan to verify and report to the Security Council on the presence of Pakistani armed men and Arab fighters who are working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Taliban mercenaries. This would break the silence that has thus far encouraged further Pakistani intervention in Afghanistan.

I should like to remind the Assembly that only those Afghans conscripted and forcibly recruited will be immune from prosecution by the Islamic State of Afghanistan for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The rest shall be subject to indictment.

One must conclude that the failure of the Jeddah indirect negotiations in particular, and of other peace initiatives at large, derive from the sad reality that peace has no place in the Taliban agenda.

While striving for the realization of noble human values and principles — the institution of a democratic system, the observance of human rights, including those of women and girls, civil liberties and elections — the Islamic State of Afghanistan reiterates its firm position to strive to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict and hereby declares its full readiness for the formation of a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government through a workable mechanism such as the traditional grand assembly, or loya jirgah, or any other representative forum under the auspices of the United Nations. Meanwhile, as long as Pakistan continues to directly and massively intervene in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, the Islamic State of Afghanistan considers the task of defending the territorial integrity, national unity and political independence of Afghanistan its immediate priority.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has high expectations that the United Nations and the international community will exert pressure on Pakistan to immediately cease its intervention in Afghanistan and to withdraw all its military personnel and armed nationals from Afghanistan; that the Security Council will address the question of foreign

intervention, the existence of terrorist networks in Afghanistan and the effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions; that the Organization of the Islamic Conference will clarify its view of the Taliban's words and deeds — spoken and carried out in the name of Islam — which we believe distort, and are contrary to, the true spirit of Islam, its tenets and injunctions; that the United Nations Drug Control Programme will assist the Islamic State of Afghanistan in the fight against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs; that the United Nations and the international community will step up their efforts for an early and peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict; and that the international community will provide humanitarian assistance to the war-stricken and drought-hit civilian population of Afghanistan. Here I should like to mention that the current drought, the most severe in 30 years, will have tremendous humanitarian repercussions.

We remain thankful for the statements made by the heads of delegation at the Millennium Summit and in the General Assembly expressing their legitimate concerns over the dangers emanating from the Pakistani Taliban-occupied territories of Afghanistan.

We deeply appreciate and support the indefatigable efforts of Mr. Francesc Vendrell, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), who has left no stone unturned, and no party to the conflict or countries concerned out of communication, in finding a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict.

I should like to conclude by stating that the United Nations cannot embark on the new millennium without appropriately addressing the issues enshrined in its Charter, among others, the question of non-interference. Neither can this international body advocate globalization in its true sense when Talibanization is threatening regional stability in our part of the world. Certainly the Pakistani military junta will remain the prime actor in this dreadful and immense tragedy in Asia.

Like many others afflicted with the Taliban plague, we wonder how far the evil threat of Talibanism will spread, how many more souls it will bury and how many new borders it must cross before the conscience of the international community is awakened, not just to consider but to adopt immediate and drastic preventive measures.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Sahaf (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): It is my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri on his assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and I should like to convey to him our best wishes for a successful accomplishment of his tasks. I should also like to express our high esteem to his predecessor, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, who conducted the work of the previous session with notable skill.

The Millennium Summit came to an end just a few days ago. From a certain point of view, it was an occasion for reviewing the state of international relations following the collapse of the bipolar international order. We have taken note of the increasing number of States complaining of the unipolar control over international affairs and the extent of the current and future dangers that this situation can give rise to.

More than 10 years ago, Iraq drew attention to the first signs of many dangers and basic problems that have since grown worse and become the focus of a significant part of the discussions of the Millennium Summit. In February 1990, President Saddam Hussein warned against the grave dangers resulting from the unilateral control assumed by the United States of America and its headlong rush to impose its hegemony on the world in general and on the Arab Gulf region and other Arab countries in particular. He also warned against the dangers posed by that State's recourse to illegitimate and immoral ways and means of achieving that goal, including the use of brute force; the exercise of pressure; political and economic blackmail; interference in the internal affairs of States; the fomenting of racial, religious and sectarian conflicts; and the use of international institutions to serve the interests of American policy.

Iraq also drew attention to the following situations at an early stage.

The first was the exploitation by the industrialized countries, the United States in particular, of scientific and technological progress for political purposes, with a view to engulfing all other countries

of the world in a wave of capitalistic globalization, claiming that globalization is an inevitable fate to which all must submit, regardless of the negative consequences and dangers it entails for the lives of the vast majority of humankind.

Secondly, it drew attention to the adoption of a double standard as far as political positions are concerned, and it noted an indifference to the legal and political standards imposed by internationally binding agreements, where a balance is struck between rights and obligations in the process of the coexistence of interests among various countries, without any distinction or discrimination.

Thirdly, it noted the prevalence of the logic of "power and opportunity" in the exploitation of United Nations mechanisms to ensure the adoption of resolutions supporting the selfish political aims of one country or a few countries at the expense of common principles in international relations, without first giving consideration to obligations undertaken under the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of justice and equity — hence the recourse to mandatory embargoes and comprehensive economic sanctions as a goal in and of itself, as well as the continuation of the policies of starvation and destruction of the economies of various countries and societies.

Fourthly, it drew attention to the imposition on the international community of unilateral policies through mechanisms and arrangements outside the international system, and to the fact that such arrangements were treated as substitutes for the United Nations in those cases where the hegemonic Powers, headed by the United States, expected to meet with strong opposition by the United Nations to those unilaterally determined policies, as we saw in the case of the aggression launched by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Fifthly, it noted the phenomenon of the forcible adjustment and adaptation of established rules of international law to serve the unilateral policies of the hegemonic Powers, headed by the United States of America, through the imposition of strange and bizarre interpretations of the contents of such rules, or even total disregard for them when said Powers were unable to impose their strange interpretations thereon. An example of this dangerous phenomenon can be found in the feverish attempts to minimize the importance of the principles of State sovereignty, national independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

Sixthly, it noted the phenomenon of evading responsibility in cases where the assumption of responsibility would not be profitable from an economic point of view, as is the case in questions related to environmental pollution, the expansion of the sphere of poverty in the world and the obstruction of the development of the States of the South, all of which are cases where the responsibility of the advanced industrialized countries is quite obvious.

The dangers, challenges and negative phenomena to which I have referred, as have many other speakers in the course of this general debate, have led to broad reflection on the solutions needed to overcome those difficulties and problematic issues. Iraq is of the view that the starting point is for United Nations actions to be a true expression of the will of all peoples and nations. That is how the Charter of the United Nations was drawn up, in order to establish a system of collective security based on common collective interests. The stability and effectiveness of the system of collective security is based on cooperation among partners and on the basis of specific obligations, not unilateral action and domination, as is the case today. The right of nations and peoples to live in peace and stability is the essential requirement for the maintenance of international peace and security. This right can be guaranteed only if it is firmly linked to the right to economic and social development and to freedom from any kind of pressure or interference.

This noble collective goal can be achieved only by upholding the United Nations system and by reforming and developing that system in order to invest it with the ability and competence to achieve that goal. Reform is particularly called for in the case of the Security Council, which must respect its obligations towards the community of States and must comply with the correct interpretation of the purposes and principles of the Charter in the performance of its functions and the use of its powers. It is also necessary to restore the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security, so as to ensure the necessary balance if the Security Council fails to assume its basic responsibilities under the Charter because of the unilateral and abusive exercise of its powers.

The wave of capitalistic globalization sweeping over today's world continues to widen the gap between the rich and the poor in the world. This dangerous phenomenon requires a forceful call to lay the foundations of a true international partnership in order to re-establish economic and social justice at both the international and national levels, upholding the principle of equitable sharing by all of the fruits of scientific and technological progress, and stopping rich countries from using science and technology as tools for imposing their policies of exploitation on the countries and peoples of the world. A dynamic partnership between the countries of the North and the countries of the South is fundamentally opposed to the logic of domination and unilateral power and to the transformation of science and technology into political tools for the subjugation of others. On the other hand, the call for democratization within countries will remain spurious unless its advocates adhere to a democratic course at the level of dealings with other States and with international organizations. Furthermore, the call for respect for international law and its primacy at the national level will remain devoid of credibility unless it is associated with the kind of conduct that calls for respect for the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law, and with the possibility of recourse to international judiciary bodies, with regard to the interpretation and application of legal provisions to ensure a delicate balance between powers and responsibilities, rights and obligations. Any affirmation of respect for human rights should not overlook the fact that civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights should, as a matter of equal importance and urgency, enjoy the same respect. Nor should such an affirmation overlook the fact that the world is characterized by cultural and civilizational diversity, and that the cultural and social assumptions tacitly accepted by a given culture cannot be imposed on other nations and peoples.

What I have just stated does not belong to the realm of theory. We in Iraq continue to suffer from the domination and abusive actions of the hegemonic powers headed by the United States of America. Our deep faith in the righteousness of our position explains the steadfastness shown by our country and our people in the face of the might of the unipolar Power.

The comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq have entered their eleventh year. By all standards, these sanctions amount to genocide and involve a brutal application of collective punishment and revenge against an entire people. There is no longer any doubt that these sanctions constitute a continued, flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, of international law and of international humanitarian law. This matter has been confirmed by the reports of United Nations agencies and humanitarian and human rights organizations. The most recent testimony to that effect is to be found in the working paper adopted by the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights at its fifty-second session, held in Geneva from 31 July to 25 August 2000. The paper affirmed that the comprehensive sanctions against Iraq are unequivocally illegal under existing international humanitarian law and human rights laws.

It is well known that both the United States and Great Britain claim that the oil-for-food programme, agreed to between the United Nations and Iraq, alleviates the impact of the unjust sanctions imposed against Iraq. Such a claim, however, is quickly proved to have no basis when set against the figures published by the United Nations itself. More than three and a half years have now passed since the inception of the programme, during which Iraq has exported $31.6 billion worth of oil. Of this total, $9.5 billion has been allocated to the Compensation Fund in Geneva and $1 billion allocated for operational administrative expenses of the United Nations while, in the course of three and a half years, only $8.3 billion has been disbursed for purchases to cover the needs of the Iraqi people.

There are also floating and semi-frozen allocations for certain needs of Iraq amounting to $10 billion that have not been disbursed owing to obstructions placed by the Americans and the British. Such egregious obstructions include the suspension of 1173 contracts, valued at more than $2 billion, relating to construction materials and humanitarian needs.

Despite increasing pressure on the international community to put an end to this ongoing genocide, two permanent members of the Security Council — the United States of America and Britain — insist on perpetuating this crime to further their plans to destabilize the Arabian Gulf region and preserve its hotbeds of tension with a view to prolonging their hegemony over and military occupation of the region and to plundering its wealth.

The United States openly declares that it is prepared to use the veto against any attempt to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq. It is indeed shameful for the United States that its Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, has declared on television that the continuation of sanctions is worth the death of 500,000 Iraqi children.

Just to clarify the matter, although the States Members of the United Nations have authorized the Security Council to act on their behalf provided that it do so in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council has, in the case of the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq, gone so far beyond the purposes and principles of the Charter as to turn itself into a cover for perpetrating a policy of genocide against an entire people. Therefore, it behoves the States Members of the United Nations to voice their opinion as to the extent of the Security Council's faithful compliance with such authorization. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that, under Article 25 of the Charter, Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter. This means that implementation of the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq, which have become illegal under international humanitarian law and human rights law, is no longer binding on States Members of the United Nations.

I must also point out that my country is being subjected to ongoing daily aggression by American and British aircraft in the no-fly zone imposed on northern and southern Iraq by unilateral decision of the Washington and London Governments. The aircraft launching the aggression take off from their bases in Saudi, Kuwaiti and Turkish territory. This continuous military action, which violates the integrity and sovereignty of Iraq's airspace, has no basis in law or in any binding resolution adopted by any competent organ of the United Nations. It constitutes instead an illegitimate unilateral action undertaken by the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

These belligerent acts constitute both interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and ongoing military aggression against Iraq through the imposition of the two no-fly zones. The illegal character of the imposition of those two no-fly zones has been confirmed by official statements issued by the Russian Federation, France and China, which have from the very outset declared their position that the imposition of those zones has no basis in law. This position is also supported by a former Secretary-General of the United Nations who, in his book entitled Unvanquished: a U.S.-U.N. Saga, makes it clear that the American claim that Security Council resolution 688 (1991) authorizes the launching of attacks against Iraq in order to enforce the no-fly zone is baseless and that the enforcement of the no-fly zones, far from having been endorsed by the Security Council, is no more than a unilateral act by the Governments of Washington and London.

The American and British acts of aggression have inflicted enormous material and moral losses on Iraq and gravely damaged its civilian infrastructure. The loss of human life to date has amounted to more than 300 martyrs, while more than 900 civilians have been wounded. The United States of America and Britain bear responsibility for these acts of aggression and for all their consequences, in accordance with the rules of state responsibility under international law. By the same rules, that responsibility is shared by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey by virtue of their participation, support and assistance in carrying out these acts of aggression. The Saudi Government provides American and British aggressors with military facilities and the bases of Rafha, Dhahran, Khamis Mushait, Al-Jauf and Tabuk, from which scores of American and British planes take off to attack Iraq. In Kuwait, the rulers provide services, facilities and financing to the American and British aggressors at the air bases of Ali Al Salim and Ahmed Al Jaber.

Iraq has discharged its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions. Consequently, the logical result would be for the embargo imposed on Iraq to be lifted. Moreover, the Charter requires that the American-British aggression against Iraq be condemned and that its perpetrators and those who participate in it — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey — bear the international responsibility, with all its legal implications.

We cannot, under any circumstances, deal with an unjust position that ignores the record of our fulfilment of our obligations and that denies us our legitimate right to have the embargo lifted, as required by the Charter and the correct interpretation of relevant Security Council resolutions. A flagrant example of how the record of the fulfilment of our obligations has been flouted and how our right to have the embargo lifted has been denied is to be found in the

underhanded way by which the United States of America and Britain have made Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) a vehicle for defrauding Iraq of its rights and for misrepresenting its full discharge of its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions, including in particular resolution 687 (1991). Resolution 1284 (1999) does not represent a solution at all, nor is it, in essence, anything other than a deliberate ploy to further American anti-Iraq policy, as embodied in the indefinite perpetuation of the embargo. We have therefore clearly declared that we shall have nothing to do with that resolution.

The Middle East region is suffering from a grave situation caused by the fact that the Zionist entity that occupies the Arab Palestinian territories possesses a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction of all kinds — nuclear, chemical and biological — and long-range ballistic missiles. The Zionist entity occupying Arab Palestine refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and refuses to place all its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Besides being a threat to peace and security in the Middle East region and the world, such a position exposes the double standard applied by the United States, which at once arms the Zionist entity and gives it unlimited support and deliberately ignores the provisions of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). This paragraph specifies that the measures imposed on Iraq should be applied to other countries in the region in order to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and of all systems of delivery of such weapons, as well as to pursue the goal of imposing international prohibitions against chemical weapons. The Security Council has taken no action in this regard, despite the fact that Iraq has implemented all the required measures. Consequently, the way in which the Security Council has acted under American pressure in this context is a flagrant example of a double-standard policy.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marc Nteturuye, Chairman of the delegation of Burundi.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Burundi delegation and on my own behalf, I first congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election to lead the work of the current session. Your election is an honour and a sign of the great esteem in which the United Nations family holds you and your country, Finland, which maintains friendly, cooperative relations with Burundi.

I would further like to pay a well deserved tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, who masterfully led the work of the previous session. We particularly appreciated his competence, dedication and high level of commitment to successfully fulfilling his mandate.

I also salute the dynamic and innovative work of Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, to achieve peace, security and development throughout the world. My delegation greatly appreciates his report, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", which undertakes a painstaking and uncompromising analysis of the great challenges of these times and proposes an approach to overcoming them so that it will be possible to live in a world free from want and fear, in a world that meets our aspirations.

Finally, it is my pleasure to welcome warmly Tuvalu as a new Member of our Organization, and at the same time to congratulate it on its wise decision to our ranks at this beginning of the new millennium.

My delegation unreservedly supports and endorses the Millennium Declaration, adopted by our heads of State and Government on 8 September 2000. We very much hope that its pertinent recommendations, made by almost all the world's leaders, will not become a dead letter. The United Nations, and each country in particular, must implement the appropriate strategies to translate the recommendations into concrete actions that can improve the future of our populations and peoples — in particular the most disadvantaged.

At one of the meetings of the Millennium Summit, which concluded on 8 September 2000, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burundi, speaking on behalf of the head of State, stated:

"The Burundian people are in the process of turning a page in their history. The agreement on peace and national reconciliation was signed on 28 August in Arusha, Tanzania, before the eyes of the entire world, which hailed the occasion. This was a qualitative leap

forward towards a better future for the Burundian people." (*A/55/PV.7*)

Later the Minister said, however:

> "Everything has not yet been resolved ... the greatest remaining challenge is ending the war, without which the implementation of the agreement is practically impossible." (*ibid.*)

The end to the war was to have been negotiated yesterday, 20 September, at a meeting scheduled in Nairobi between the Government and the rebels, and before the heads of State of the region. The President of the Republic himself represented the Government. The heads of State of the region and, of course, the mediator were also there. The three political parties that had not signed the 28 August peace agreement were also there, and they signed the agreement. Thus the maximum number of parties have now accepted this agreement.

As for the rebels, only one movement, the FNL, was represented by its leader. The head of the other movement — the CNDD-FDD, which is the more important group — did not make the trip. The two movements refused to negotiate anything or to meet with the Government delegation. Rather, they contented themselves with repeating their preconditions and pleading that they had to consult their rank and file before making any commitments.

Thus the meeting was a failure. The hopes of the Burundi people of seeing the violence come to an end were dashed. The implementation of the peace agreement has been called into question. The signatories to the agreement on peace and national reconciliation — negotiated two years ago — are now accused of being traitors and men of straw, and are being asked to return to the negotiating table. Those taking part in the rebel uprising go so far as to call into question the good faith of the leaders who sponsored the negotiations and the signing of the peace agreement.

Before denouncing the 28 August peace agreement, the rebel uprising had hidden itself behind a series of preconditions for the ceasefire negotiations. The two principal preconditions were as follows.

The first precondition was the dismantling of the regroupment camps. This precondition has been meaningless since 31 July 2000, because the Government had committed itself to dismantling the camps by that date, and it kept this promise, as the United Nations has confirmed on the basis of reports from its agencies working in the field in Burundi. The facilitator, Mr. Nelson Mandela, himself publicly reaffirmed these reports during the signing of the peace agreement on 28 August.

The second precondition related to the release of political prisoners — an issue that has been the source of a great deal of disagreement between the negotiating parties. But since then, thanks to the compromise that the parties have reached, contained in article 15 and point 20 of the second protocol to the peace agreement, the current Government can create an independent commission to look into, inter alia, the issues of prison conditions and political prisoners.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

That is why it has just asked the Secretary-General to send to Burundi a team of experts in criminal law to inquire freely into the existence or non-existence of political prisoners in Burundi. It is no longer possible to deal with this question outside of the peace agreement unless one wants to imperil the entire peace process. The Government and the people of Burundi were very grateful for the opportunity they had to explain to the Facilitator during his two visits to Burundi how delicate the problem was.

Burundians suffer enormously from war; they want finally to breathe the air of peace. Deadly, wanton ambushes against people travelling on the roads, attacks on innocent people in the hills and in the displaced persons camps, theft of livestock, destruction of houses, crops, social infrastructure and so on — all of this must stop so that, finally, our country can regain its peace and tranquillity.

Setting conditions to halt violence is cruel, and the international community must condemn this attitude and those responsible for it. Given the intransigence of the rebels, the Government of Burundi calls upon the region and the international community to implement the provisions of article 2 of the peace agreement, which states that if the armed groups of the non-signatory parties reject the invitation made in the agreement to suspend hostilities and to start negotiations for a ceasefire, the guarantors of the agreement, particularly the Governments of neighbouring States, and the international organizations will take "the necessary steps to stop,

demobilize, disarm and, where appropriate, arrest, detain and repatriate the members of these armed groups and, furthermore, take all appropriate steps against any party which encourages and supports such activities".

In the absence of a ceasefire not only do the innocent continue to die, but also the refugees and displaced persons cannot return home; assistance to rebuild the country cannot begin; and even the transitional institutions established cannot function properly. Why is the international community silent when two armed movements are holding hostage an entire people that had pinned so many hopes on the peace agreement which has now been signed by 19 out of 19 parties — in other words, all of the negotiators?

The Government, as it has often repeated, is prepared to negotiate directly with the rebels and to conclude the ceasefire agreement as soon as possible. It will also continue to explain the peace agreement to the people so that they will support its contents and its programme. It is also continuing consultations in order to arrive at compromise solutions regarding the reservations expressed by certain parties about the agreement and other questions that are still pending.

We would be deluding ourselves if we said that Burundi will attain peace and security without a favourable environment in the subregion and in Africa in general. Unfortunately, nothing leads one yet to hope that peace will be established in the Great Lakes region any time soon. The Lusaka agreements signed in August 1999 still offer a few glimmers of hope before actually entering into force. However, they are an important basis for the resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The summit that took place, again in Lusaka, on 14 and 15 August 2000 unfortunately ended in failure, even though it was one more chance to establish the basis for peace. However, a lost opportunity should not discourage us. We would like here to say that we very much support President Frederick Chiluba of the Repuolic of Zambia for his tireless efforts to find a solution to the question of the Congo, and we encourage him to persevere.

Contrary to the allegations made by the head of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from this rostrum on 16 September, I wish to reaffirm that the only interest of my country, Burundi, is to maintain security over our borders. We have no other ambitions, political or economic, with regard to any neighbouring country. And we hope that the same applies to our neighbouring countries, in particular those who give refuge to and assist the Burundian rebels.

Each country, and the subregion in general, must focus on problems of development. The ideology of genocide, which is undermining the entire Great Lakes region, and the many armed rebellions by those who champion that ideology, will be overcome only through the concerted and determined efforts of all States of the Great Lakes region, with the active support of the international community.

In this context, the conference on peace, security and development for the Great Lakes countries, envisaged for several years now, can be successful only if each country of the region makes a meaningful effort to improve their domestic policies.

By holding the Millennium Summit, the United Nations chose a very opportune moment to discuss the great challenges that await us in the coming century: peace, security and disarmament, on the one hand, and development and the eradication of poverty, on the other.

As is so well summarized by the Secretary-General in his report, we must live free from fear and free from want. Although these two goals are the very essence of our Organization, it must be stated that, unfortunately, we are still wide of the mark. Fratricidal wars continue to break out in various parts of the world and it takes too long to put the fires out. Conflicts break out on the borders of neighbouring countries, and entire communities are forced into exile. Given the multitude of these conflicts and their complexity, the international community has only a mixed record of success. Like other heads of delegations that have preceded me, I am inclined to wonder why our Organization does not do better in preventing and resolving conflicts and in peacekeeping.

On this subject, we very much support the implementation of the valuable recommendations in the Brahimi report, which was the outcome of an in-depth study at the request of Mr. Kofi Annan on the activities of the United Nations in the area of peace. We welcome the steps already taken by the Secretary-General to prepare a detailed plan for the implementation of these recommendations.

If our Organization were to engage in some self-questioning, we would probably find that one of the primary causes for failure lies in the very functioning of the United Nations. The Security Council decides on everything, and it decides too slowly. In the face of urgent situations, there is too much procrastination due to political expediency which is very often insufficiently understood by the international community.

Over the last fifty years, it is the same people who decide the fate of humanity while safeguarding the interests of some States as a matter of priority. People who seek urgent assistance thus have the impression that they are being held hostage or are being abandoned to their fate because international solidarity, so keenly awaited, does not materialize. My delegation, therefore, reiterates the hope that we will re-think the functioning, composition and attributes of the Security Council in order to revitalize it and to adapt it to this ongoing state of change.

The question of the equitable representation of all regions of the world on the Security Council and the question of increasing the number of members, both permanent and non-permanent, deserve our attention. They are in tune with the imperatives of democracy and legitimacy in making decisions in this highly important Organization — the United Nations. Only such a reform can restore the confidence of all Member States in reviving the force of law in international affairs, because today, weak nations are confronting, basically, the law of force.

In order to do this the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the Statute of which was adopted in Rome in 1998, will, I am sure, be a useful tool to combat impunity.

Although sanctions fall exclusively within the competence of the Security Council, from 31 July 1996 until January 1999, Burundi lived under a regime of economic sanctions imposed by neighbouring countries, which was in violation of the United Nations Charter because it was not an initiative of the Security Council. As has been pointed out, such sanctions have proved to be both unfair and counterproductive. Because of the adverse effects of these sanctions in the economic and social area, those who suffer the most are innocent people — the elderly, women and children. The Security Council should therefore resort to targeted sanctions only in serious and exceptional circumstances when other methods of pressure have failed, in order to avoid causing harm to the entire population.

The other major obstacle to world peace is the proliferation of light weapons — paradoxically, in poor countries. Only with the combined efforts of all States will we be able to deal with this phenomenon, because arms manufacturers and merchants form a worldwide network that represents big financial interests. Any peacekeeping programme should therefore include, as a matter of priority, the monitoring of flows of light arms, since it is such weapons that are used by most clandestine movements to cause death and destruction through terrorism.

Furthermore, fear cannot be dispelled from the world as long as competition to produce weapons of mass destruction continues. Our Organization should do everything it can to bring about complete global denuclearization in the medium term. This standing threat to humanity undermines all hopes for a world of peace, to which the founding fathers of our world Organization aspired.

Those with the responsibility of governing some of the poorest countries in the world appreciate, on a daily basis, just how hard it is to ensure that peace can prevail in a community that is bereft of food and other basic needs. A proverb in our national language, Kirundi, says, "If you go to sleep with an empty stomach, you will wake up with a heart full of hatred". It is no secret that the world has an abundance of riches and resources of all kinds. But that does not prevent people in some parts of the world from dying of hunger or malnutrition, while their fellow human beings in other parts of the world — and sometimes even in their own countries and cities — are wallowing in luxury. This means that true cooperation is the kind that encourages growth in production and income to enable people to take control of health, education, nutrition and decent housing. By giving greater assistance to the poorest countries, the rich countries would be working not only for a fairer world but for greater security for their own people.

The millennium report of the Secretary-General, submitted under agenda item 49 (b) of the fifty-fourth session, rightly stresses the seriousness of the tragedy caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic throughout the world, focusing particular attention on Africa. Of the 36 million people who are HIV-positive, more than 23

million are in sub-Saharan African. According to that report, in the same region, more than one child in ten has lost its mother to AIDS. The very pessimistic prediction has been made that by 2010 there will be 40 million orphans. Burundi has not escaped this dangerous epidemic, which appeared at the beginning of the 1980s and is continuing to cause devastation today, particularly among the most active and, therefore, the most productive people.

In the meantime, with the assistance of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and other actors, to which we extend our heartfelt thanks, my Government has launched a robust prevention policy against HIV/AIDS. A special fund has been established to combat this scourge, which could decimate entire generations. That is why we endorse the recommendations of the Secretary-General to reduce the HIV infection rate, particularly by increasing access to information, education and health services for people who are already infected. At the same time, we recommend that the pharmaceutical industry be provided with all the financial support necessary to develop an effective and affordable vaccine to eradicate this scourge by the end of the century.

Before we can be sure of having built a more secure and prosperous world, we must be mindful of the need to bequeath to our children an environmentally balanced planet. Unfortunately, we have to say that the industrial progress that was supposed to have generated prosperity is making our natural environment increasingly unhealthy. We must, as a matter of urgency, control the quality of industrial production and the phenomenon of population growth, particularly in urban areas, if we wish to safeguard quality of life for future generations.

We have often behaved as if nature would remain healthy without our making any effort. Today, desertification is a threat to many countries that used to be covered with vegetation. Drought has invaded regions that used to be crossed by great rivers and streams. In those places where there is still enough water, it takes millions of dollars to treat it to make it potable.

My delegation would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal to all Member States at the Millennium Summit to fund an assessment of ecosystems before it is too late. The result would no doubt be a clear, realistic programme to protect our environment.

Despite the difficult situation in which we have been living for several years, Burundi, in close cooperation with other Member States, will work steadfastly to achieve the goals pursued by our Organization. We hope that the United Nations will adapt to current challenges and to changing international relations for the benefit of all humankind.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hussain Shihab, Chairman of the delegation of Maldives.

Mr. Shihab (Maldives): Allow me at the outset to associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Holkeri on his election to preside over the General Assembly at this historic session. It is a tribute to his distinguished political experience and to the invaluable contributions made by his country, Finland, to the work of our Organization.

I should also like to extend my appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, for the excellent manner in which he discharged his responsibilities during the fifty-fourth session.

I would also like to pay a special tribute to our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for the inspirational leadership and the moral authority he has brought to our Organization. His report to the Millennium Summit, "We the peoples", will remain a powerful and luminous beacon as we strive to make the world a more just and peaceful place for future generations and the United Nations a more effective, efficient and responsive Organization in the new millennium.

Exactly 35 years ago today, Maldives was admitted to the United Nations. We were proud to take a seat in this world body, which has seen steady growth in its membership, activities and influence. Today, we are pleased to welcome to our midst the island nation of Tuvalu. We look forward to working with Tuvalu in furthering the cause of small island nations for a more economically humane and socially just world that is environmentally sustainable in the future.

Wars, hunger and famine have marred much of the twentieth century. Terrorism, drugs and the spread of HIV/AIDS threaten to destroy the peace and prosperity of our future generations. Economic inequality and social injustice have tended to increase,

despite many laudable efforts to the contrary. As technological advances bring untold riches and opportunities to many, many more continue to live in deprivation, their lives becoming increasingly marginalized in a fast-changing world.

Only a few days back, the Millennium Summit brought together the largest-ever gathering of world leaders in human history. It was not only a historic occasion but also one that rekindled the hopes and aspirations of the world's peoples. The Millennium Declaration adopted at the Summit charts out a future vision for the world in which "the peoples" have rightfully been given pride of place in our efforts to reshape the future of humanity. As my President, President Abdul Gayoom, stated at the Millennium Summit, "The gap between expectation and result must be eliminated" (*A/55/PV.3*) in the new millennium.

The leaders of the world have recognized the dangers posed to the future of humanity. They have pledged themselves to a better world — a world that is more just, a world in which every human being can live in dignity, a world that rejoices in its diversity of races, religions and culture. They have pledged to strengthen the United Nations so that it may have the resources and capability to deliver the dreams of "we the peoples" of the world. It now remains for us to translate these words into deeds, rhetoric to reality. Action must begin now.

For over two decades, Maldives has managed to make significant economic and social progress. We are indeed proud of what we have achieved with the limited resources at our disposal. A stable political environment, a supportive international community and the creativity of our people have combined to help our economic growth. However, this does not reduce in any way the vulnerability of our economy. We continue to have a small and narrow economic base comprising fisheries and tourism, both of which are extremely susceptible to external forces that are often beyond our control. Indeed, the precarious nature of our economy is readily evidenced whenever the price of tuna plunges in the international market. Similarly, any downturn in the economy of major tourist markets or regional instability casts a long shadow on our tourist industry.

We do not want to wear the least developed country label for ever. As a small but proud nation, we, too, would like to be a self-reliant country. National pride, unfortunately, does not feed our population or educate our children. It is for these reasons that during the Economic and Social Council meeting in July this year, Maldives argued against its removal from the list of least developed countries, which would undoubtedly pull the rug from underneath our feet. Indeed, our successes in national development to date have been highly dependent on the concessional finance and developmental assistance we have enjoyed as a least developed country. The withdrawal of access to such concessional assistance at this crucial stage of our development would seriously cripple our developmental efforts. Our economy will slide backwards if we lose preferential access to markets. Our debt burden will become unsustainable.

We take some comfort in the decision made by the Economic and Social Council to defer the consideration of the recommendation to graduate Maldives from the list of least developed countries. The structural impediments facing our developmental efforts are so formidable that the country's graduation at this stage is not justified. Our geophysical fragmentation, combined with remoteness from major markets, accentuates our vulnerabilities, many of which are unique. Maldives is not simply an island nation; it is a nation of islands. In fact, we have over 1,100 small, low-lying islands. Our population is scattered over 198 islands, each of which needs to be provided with adequate administrative and socio-economic infrastructure. Poor and porous soil conditions prohibit most agricultural production, while avenues for economic diversification are extremely limited. Transport and communication costs are prohibitive. That is why we have appealed to the international community to take a closer look at our situation and re-examine the issue of our graduation from the list of least developed countries. We hope the international community will understand and support our cause.

Since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, the small island developing States have been waiting for the international community to meet the pledges made at the Conference on small island developing States, while their economic and ecological challenges have increased manifold. We therefore are happy that the world leaders at the Millennium Summit have once again highlighted the special needs of small island developing States, including the necessity of developing a vulnerability index that can truly capture the unique features of these States. The leaders have

also resolved to implement rapidly and in full the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. These are welcome developments which we hope will soon be translated into action by the international community.

Allow me to stress the importance of the early completion of the vulnerability index called for by this Assembly. In developing this index, we believe, the international community should take into account not only those factors that are similar among the island States but also those that are unique to particular island States. For example, while some may be prone to cyclones and hurricanes, others may be more affected by beach erosion or coral bleaching.

Maldives has consistently voiced its concerns over the negative impact of environmental degradation on small island States. We welcomed the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. Unfortunately, the slow pace of its ratification by the international community continues to endanger many small island developing States. It is indeed regrettable that to date only 23 countries have ratified the Protocol.

We are, however, heartened by the fact that the Millennium Declaration calls upon the international community to expedite the early ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to ensure its entry into force by the tenth anniversary of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002. We call upon the United Nations to take a leading role in making the relevant resolve of our leaders at the Summit a reality. As the President of the Maldives, speaking at the Millennium Summit, declared,

"Humanity's quest for progress must be sustainable. We have no right to destroy the Earth. Ecological damage must be stopped. Global warming must be curbed. All low-lying countries must be saved." (*A/55/PV.3*)

The protection and security of small States continue to constitute an issue of critical concern to my country. Among the 189 Members that compose the United Nations today, many are small countries which require protection from a variety of threats to their security. The Maldives believes that within the sphere of international peace and security, which has always remained a high priority on the United Nations agenda, the security of small States should continue to receive special consideration as a political and moral obligation of the international community. The interest and concern of the United Nations on this issue should not be allowed to diminish, even in the future.

Globalization is today a reality. No country, large or small, can swim against the tide of globalization and the digital revolution that is reshaping the modern world. Globalization must benefit all countries. Its costs must be shared evenly by all countries. The least developed countries must be granted duty-free and quota-free access to the markets of developed countries for their exports. They deserve debt relief, including debt cancellation, in return for demonstrable commitments to poverty reduction. Development assistance needs to be increased. We remain hopeful that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held next year, will usher in a new era of development for the least developed countries.

During the course of last year, the United Nations was able to record some important achievements. The follow-up sessions to the world conferences on women and on social development reaffirmed the goals of creating a more just and tolerant society. Modest but significant progress was achieved by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons towards freeing the world from the scourge of nuclear arms. Efforts towards the establishment of an International Criminal Court are moving ahead. A valuable framework for strengthening United Nations peacekeeping operations has been laid out by the Brahimi report (*A/55/305*).

Yet many shortcomings and frustrations continue to plague the world community. Conflicts based on ethnic arrogance rage on. Poverty persists at a level that is morally repugnant. The spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic needs to be urgently addressed. International peace and security continue to be threatened by terrorism and drug trafficking cartels operating within and across borders.

A comprehensive and permanent peace settlement in the Middle East continues to elude us. This is disappointing. We would like to reiterate our full support for the cause of the Palestinian people and to encourage the sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East to continue to pursue their efforts towards achieving a lasting peace in the region.

The situation in the Gulf continues to trouble us. Peace, progress and security in that region can never be

achieved unless settlements on all unresolved issues are complied with fully by all the parties concerned in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions. We would like to reaffirm our unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. As I mentioned before, we continue to believe that the United Nations has an obligation to uphold the security and territorial integrity of all Member States, including small States.

The Maldives firmly believes that the myriad challenges facing the world today can be effectively addressed only in a multilateral framework in which the United Nations must play the central role. Despite the many shortcomings it may have, the United Nations remains the only truly universal organization where global issues can be addressed. We believe that an increasingly interdependent world calls for a strengthened multilateral system with an effective international legal regime that is respected by all nations. It is with this conviction that the Maldives has become a State party to a number of international conventions and treaties, including the eight conventions and treaties to which we became party during the Millennium Summit, taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the Secretary-General.

We fully support the steps being taken by the Secretary-General in the process of reforming our Organization. While there has been much progress, more remains to be done. Reform of the Security Council to reflect the political reality of the modern world is essential if the United Nations is to remain a credible and effective organization, enjoying the confidence of the peoples of the world. Reform of the United Nations must aim at enhancing the legitimacy of the Organization, making the United Nations more democratic and transparent, and reinforcing the ability of the United Nations to uphold equality among nations.

At the Millennium Summit, our leaders illuminated the way forward. It now remains for us to move forward in concert, for the benefit of the peoples of the world.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Mr. Stanislaus Mudenge.

Mr. Mudenge (Zimbabwe): I wish to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland on his election to the presidency of this historic session of the General Assembly. I also take this opportunity to congratulate his predecessor, my dear brother and colleague, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, on a job well done.

Zimbabwe joins other Members of the Assembly in welcoming the admission of Tuvalu as the one hundred and eighty-ninth Member State of the United Nations.

Since a Millennium Assembly can only come once in a lifetime, it is my singular honour and pleasure to address this Assembly. The twentieth century was probably the most eventful in the history and the experience of Zimbabwe. As we enter the twenty-first century and the new millennium, the people of Zimbabwe, in a very symbolic and yet historic way, find themselves concluding painful chapters of their experience, whose closure is critical to the laying of a foundation for a better future.

Structural inequalities are a fundamental reality of Africa's colonial past, which many countries like my own are grappling with to this day. In my country 70 per cent of Zimbabwe's best arable land is still controlled by less than 1 per cent of the population — roughly 4,500 settlers or their descendants. This is in a country of nearly 13 million people. It is a historical fact that the colonial regime forcefully robbed us of this land without paying us any compensation. As I speak, the Government of Zimbabwe is in the process of taking back 5 million of the 12 million hectares of our prime land to settle landless peasants.

Zimbabwe's land reform programme is meant not only to correct the wrongs wrought on our society by colonialism, but also to restore our people's heritage and basic means of subsistence and economic participation. In this endeavour, we have received neither the cooperation of those sectors of our society to which colonialism bequeathed special privileges, nor the acknowledgement or support of former colonizers who willed those privileges. In pursuit of their policies, those powerful interests have employed their financial might, as well as their control of the media to not only choke our economy but also to demonize us before the world.

We cannot, in one breath, pay lip service to human rights, equality and poverty eradication and, in the next, defend inequality, which condemns the majority to a life in squalor. We invite all our partners to see through the veil of the negative and racist media

blitz, acquaint themselves with our people's real need for justice, restoration and agrarian reform and help us remove the barriers that constrain poor people's ability to benefit from their economy and to contribute to its growth.

Our determination to undertake land reform in Zimbabwe is one of the "crimes" cited in the so-called Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000, which was passed by the United States Senate in June this year and is before Congress as I speak. It proposes to prescribe the outcome of our land reform exercise and seeks to virtually usurp the authority of the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Most ironically, the so-called Democracy Act proposes to authorize the investment of United States funds of around Z$ 300 million in the breeding of opposition parties in Zimbabwe. That amount, which is exclusively for opposition parties, is more than four times the Z$70 million distributed by the Zimbabwean fiscus among all political parties that have a stipulated threshold representation in Parliament. Are we expected to just stand idly by and watch helplessly as our destiny is determined from outside our country? Where, I ask, is our self-determination and our sovereignty, for which so much blood and so many lives were sacrificed by our people?

The measure seeks to hurt Zimbabwe's fortunes even further by issuing United States directors at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank with standing directives to vote against Zimbabwe at every opportunity. This means that even if Zimbabwe met all macroeconomic requirements and exercised the requisite fiscal discipline it would still be disqualified in its quest for assistance from the Bretton Woods institutions, on the basis of political considerations that are totally extraneous to the stipulated technical criteria.

Just what are the rules of the game, and to whom are these international financial institutions accountable? Do we need any further justification for the resounding call for a new international financial architecture? For while the current international financial architecture is subservient to the interests of the rich and the strong, even to the satisfaction of their last extraterritorial exploit, it remains for ever insensitive to the survival needs of the small, the weak and the poor.

Zimbabwe's involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help prevent mayhem, bloodshed and the overthrow of a legitimate Government there is another "crime" cited in the Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000. At the invitation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, together with other allies of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), sent troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help fend off an invasion by two of that country's neighbours. The responsive intervention of the SADC allies effectively contained the situation and established the relative calm and stability prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today. It also paved the way for the peace process that culminated in the signing last year of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which, all involved agree, offers the best hope for establishing and maintaining peace in the region.

What does Zimbabwe get in return for its sacrifices in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter? Sanctions and threats of more sanctions are the response. For helping to create the very conditions that enabled the United Nations to set foot in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe is today questioned, tried and sentenced to pariah status. Some of the proponents of the Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000 have demanded that Zimbabwe withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo before they can even consider withdrawing that measure.

Are we being punished for creating conditions that enabled the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance to Congolese communities? Are we being vilified for enabling thousands of Congolese children to get polio vaccinations and other types of life-saving immunization? After offering our partnership in the quest for peace and human well-being, we expect the international community to respond accordingly and cooperate with us.

Instead of punishing those who invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo, instead of censuring those who are violating the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in blatant desecration of cardinal principles of the Charter, instead of questioning those who are already in contempt of Security Council orders to withdraw immediately from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some members of the international community have chosen, rather, to

victimize Zimbabwe, whose troops are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the invitation of the Government of that country. Exactly what outcome does the international community wish to see in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

I reiterate, and categorically so, that Zimbabwe is committed to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and to Security Council resolutions adopted on this question. In this regard, Zimbabwe is ready to immediately withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, as soon as the United Nations deploys peacekeepers in that country. We therefore urge the Secretary-General to deploy the observer mission already authorized by the Security Council as part of phase two deployment, so that we can move to phase three and the deployment of actual peacekeepers in order to enable us to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Like their neighbours in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the peace-loving people of Angola are victims of an imposed war that has been fomented by greed rather than grievance. While the crisis is far from resolved, we are mollified by the position taken by the Security Council, through the Angola sanctions Committee, to ensure the effective application of the embargo against UNITA. We support the Secretary-General's stance of naming and shaming the violators of sanctions as a way of preventing the opportunism and greed that fan conflicts. This was the position adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its last summit, in Lomé, Togo.

In both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, we challenge the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, to come to the aid and defence of the innocent victims of war, to protect their natural heritage and resources from pillage, and to safeguard their territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

With regard to the Lockerbie affair, we still await the Security Council's comprehensive and final response to Libya's full compliance with the Council's resolutions. It was the Council's own commitment that such a conclusive step would be taken 90 days after Libya's full compliance. We call for transparency and fairness in the trial itself, at The Hague, to avoid any miscarriage of justice.

The international community must never lose track of the long, drawn-out dialogue on the peace process in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine. We call for good faith and consistency in the negotiations until the brotherly Palestinian people attain statehood with national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In Western Sahara, the international community owes it to the Sahrawi people to ensure the early holding of a free and fair referendum to allow them the priceless opportunity to determine their destiny.

On the global economic front, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed tremendous progress in some parts of the world, but it also saw stagnation and setbacks, even in some countries that had previously experienced fast economic growth. Periods of economic and financial crisis lead to retrenchment, wherein concern for people gives way to concern for balancing budgets and payments. Those crises have underscored the importance of understanding and strengthening the social underpinnings of development to ensure that peoples, their cultures and their societies are taken into account in the process of development.

Poverty amid plenty is an affront to our common humanity. At a time when the world has the wherewithal to attack poverty vigorously, spectacular affluence and abject poverty are found side by side. In contrast to its potential as the ultimate provider of new opportunities for growth and development worldwide, globalization has been accompanied by widening income disparities among, as well as within, countries and regions. Its ill effects have disproportionately victimized the most vulnerable and marginalized nations and sections of society. Globalization is redefining the nature and role of States and the governance of international bodies, thereby subordinating democratic political processes to unaccountable economic and financial actors and institutions. Globalization is thus undermining the ability of Governments to serve as guarantors of the social, economic, political and cultural health of our communities.

At the expense of our common goals and objectives for international economic cooperation, we have surrendered to blind market forces in the faint hope that somehow things will, as if by magic, turn out right. The consequences of that impoverishing process are clearly visible in a number of alarming trends, such as the takeover of national assets by transnational corporations in the name of public enterprise

privatization and commercialization. As a result, Africa enters the new century hanging on the vagaries of global markets, accounting for only 1 per cent of global gross domestic product and about 2 per cent of world trade.

Geographically, Africa is probably the world's most fragmented region. The continent is demarcated by about 165 borders dividing it into 53 countries, 22 of them with less than 5 million people and 11 with less than 1 million. That fragmentation imposes real constraints on development, and, without economic integration, Africa will fall farther behind. We therefore call upon the international community to support our efforts at regional integration as we promote regional public assets and initiatives, including regional infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports and power-pooling systems, infectious disease control, centres of excellence for training, regional markets and trade, and agricultural research and early warning systems for drought.

Despite talk of the global village, it is apparent that Africa's lonely days are not yet over. For we still have cause and occasion to feel marginalized in so many respects. We know what it is like to give passage to emergency aircraft and sea vessels that criss-cross our airspace and waterways to attend to emerging crises in distant places while our own crises simmer on and explode in our faces. Our ceasefire agreements and truces are tested beyond limit, while the United Nations stands aloof and unimpressed; yet urgent interventions are deployed to flashpoints in other regions, even without ceasefire guarantees.

Hesitant and half-spirited interventions by the Security Council in several African conflicts have neither done the job nor enhanced the credibility of the United Nations. As the United Nations organ uniquely mandated to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council should make itself equally attentive to the needs of the world's family of nations, including through cooperation with regional arrangements everywhere, as provided for in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Or is it true that so long as the Security Council remains unreformed, it will always fail to respond adequately to the interests of all the Members of the United Nations?

As we review the progress of nations and design the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, we need to remind ourselves that "we the peoples" of the world constitute the real wealth of the brotherhood of nations. The thrust of the United Nations agenda — and, indeed, of development — is therefore to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, peaceful and creative lives.

I wish to put it to this Millennium Assembly that the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century is to champion the agenda of the world's weak, those marginalized and impoverished by globalization, those currently circumscribed to the margins of policy and decision-making in the international economic and socio-political system. In brief, it is to protect the weak and manage the strong.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Janet Bostwick, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas.

Ms. Bostwick (Bahamas): The Bahamas delegation sincerely congratulates Mr. Harri Holkeri on his election to the presidency of this Millennium Assembly and assures him and the members of his Bureau of its full cooperation and support.

I wish also to commend Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, who presided over the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The Bahamas delegation also wishes to pay special tribute to the Co-Chairpersons of the Millennium Summit, Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, and Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia. Their combined wisdom and focused leadership contributed in no small part to the success of the Millennium Summit.

The Bahamas is pleased to welcome Tuvalu as the newest Member of this Organization. Tuvalu's membership is a sign of the confidence that the United Nations continues to enjoy among nations of the world as the best hope for the realization of the aspirations of all peoples.

We applaud the Secretary-General's continuing commitment to the United Nations. This was particularly demonstrated by his bold proposals for the reform and revitalization of the Organization, which culminated in the practical, responsive and visionary Millennium Summit Declaration. The Declaration was unanimously adopted by an unprecedented number of heads of State or Government. In this Millennium Declaration, world leaders collectively and succinctly

outlined the labyrinth of issues on the global agenda for which solutions are essential in the twenty-first century. It is now our responsibility to implement it in good faith. It cannot be business as usual in this United Nations.

The Millennium Declaration placed globalization high on the list of issues requiring urgent attention. As a process offering opportunities for growth and development, globalization has never been challenged. It is a grim reality, however, that few have profited, and some, particularly smaller economies, have become marginalized and even more vulnerable.

For many of the small island developing States of the Caribbean, their mainstay industries, particularly bananas and financial services, have come under extreme pressure in this rapidly globalizing world. With respect to financial services, the Bahamas has always cooperated, and will continue to cooperate, with international efforts to combat money laundering. Currently we are amending our legislation and reinforcing our regulatory regime so as to fully comply with international best practices.

While the Bahamas will move expeditiously to correct deficiencies in our financial services industry, we call upon the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) and the other concerned financial agencies established by developed countries to immediately adopt open and transparent procedures to recognize when such deficiencies have been corrected and to then take the necessary action as a matter of priority.

Additionally, it has been a source of serious concern to us in the Bahamas that one group of countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), would seek to unilaterally determine what constitutes "harmful tax competition" in respect to financial services. We urge those countries to cooperate in resolving these issues on the basis of constructive multilateral dialogue, given that the pressures applied in this and other areas not only disrupt growth and development, but could well lead to the reversal of the gains made in the development process.

The intensity of protests in Seattle and in Washington, D.C., have mirrored the frustration of many developing countries in a globalization process which appears to be biased towards the rich and powerful and to widen the gap between haves and have-nots. Yet no country can opt out of globalization. Nor can we ignore the challenge its potentially devastating consequences present for peace and security. The United Nations resolve that globalization must be fully inclusive and equitable should be buttressed with effective action to ensure a vibrant global economic order in which all countries, large and small, developed and developing, mutually benefit.

The Bahamas is now an observer in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and will move purposefully towards full membership. We have chosen to take this course of action because we intend to participate fully in the WTO processes. These processes should, and must, make globalization and trade liberalization inclusive and equitable instruments for development. We made this commitment at the highest level at the Millennium Summit.

There is another commitment in the Millennium Declaration that is of critical importance to small island developing States such as the Bahamas and other members of the Caribbean Community. The Millennium Declaration reaffirms the United Nations resolve to address the special needs of the small island developing States by implementing both the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly on this plan. It did so in recognition of the vulnerability of their economies to external shocks and their susceptibility to climate change, sea level rise and natural disasters.

I wish to re-emphasize here that the call in the Barbados plan is for action. In line with the Millennium Declaration and their own national efforts, the small island developing States now expect action, through initiatives such as global disaster management strategies and a vulnerability index. Such initiatives must take fully into account the socio-economic development and survival of small island developing States. For Caribbean Community (CARICOM) small States, we also hope to see the development of an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea advanced.

We would also, in this United Nations, urge our partners in the developed world not to continue to put our countries at risk by shipping nuclear and hazardous wastes through the Caribbean Sea. We reiterate this appeal in the face of recent evidence that suggests that

the highly professed safety measures touted by the nuclear-power industry are questionable.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders committed themselves to overcoming many seemingly intractable problems for which effective responses can only be of a global nature.

The world's drug problem, and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons, are issues for which the global community urgently needs results. While these twin evils are, in our view, closely linked, every indication is that the trafficking in firearms is taking on a life of its own. The introduction of firearms into ordinary, non-drug related criminal activity, and even domestic conflict, is perhaps the greatest single threat to peace and stability in the Bahamas today.

Therefore, the Bahamas looks forward to next year's United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We are confident that the commitments made in our Millennium Declaration will motivate us to grasp this significant opportunity for concerted action. We especially urge developed countries in which firearms are manufactured to take the steps necessary to prevent illicit arms trafficking.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders committed themselves to the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease, and to making the right to development a reality for all. This commitment compels us to act on several fronts to achieve our objectives. We must, for example, reach agreement to ensure the success of the high-level international and intergovernmental event on financing for development, to be held in the year 2001.

Our commitment means that we must ensure that technological advances benefit not just the few, but all of humankind. We must work more assiduously towards the elimination of human rights violations, including violence against women and the trafficking in women and children. We must ensure equal rights for men and women, to bring down barriers to development. For countries such as the Bahamas, forced to bear the brunt of sustained illegal migration, the United Nations must collectively address not only the challenges of migration flows worldwide, but also the reprehensible practice of alien-smuggling.

Our commitment means that we must achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

Addressing the unfolding human tragedy of HIV/AIDS is also an important front on which the Millennium Declaration charges us to work. The pernicious effect of this disease, particularly on the economically productive sectors of society, has had a devastating impact on families, communities and nations globally. However, the major burden that AIDS presents, particularly for health care systems, has been most profoundly felt in developing countries, where it threatens to limit and reverse development efforts. Adequate resources must be provided to confront HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa. In this regard, the pharmaceutical industry must be encouraged to play its necessary role.

The Bahamas welcomed the recently convened conference in Barbados under the auspices of the World Bank, UNAIDS, the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), CARICOM and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which brought together high-level Caribbean health, education, economic development and labour policy-makers. The Bahamas is committed to doing its part in addressing this serious problem and has offered to host a regional centre to assist in combating this HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The agenda set for the United Nations by world leaders is a formidable one. Forgive me if I restate the obvious — the Secretary-General cannot carry out the crucial mandates we ourselves have entrusted to him unless and until he is assured of adequate and predictable resources on a timely basis. At the same time, the quotas on the basis of which the Organization receives its resources must be assessed in a fair, transparent and equitable manner. Only in this way will we be able to give renewed impetus to the vibrant process of administrative and budgetary reform currently under way. By so doing, we will also break the cycle of the Organization's inability to implement the mandates that we ourselves have collectively set.

Furthermore, we must arrest the process whereby many issues, including some of critical concern to developing countries, have been moved out of the ambit of this universal Organization into narrower, special interest organizations. These organizations harmonize and seek the interest of their Member States. Therefore, the decisions they take can run counter, not only to the interest of non-Member States, but also to that of global society as a whole.

Allow me to raise one more serious concern - the safety and security of our international civil service, the dedicated men and women who are the embodiment of the United Nations global outreach. In this respect, we extend our profound condolences to the families of the staff members who lost their lives as a result of the recent attack on the United Nations office in West Timor. We also join other delegations in condemning this attack and in urging the Government of Indonesia to spare no effort in bringing those responsible to justice. We also extend condolences to the family of the United Nations refugee worker killed in an attack in Guinea. In situations such as these, we must show that we can meet the concerns of our peoples and our world.

Through the historic Millennium Declaration, heads of State and Government reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations and its Charter as indispensable foundations for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. They also emphasized that the United Nations is the pre-eminent global organization and has a central role in setting and acting upon the global agenda. Heads of State and Government equally provided us with a concise, focused and realistic blueprint for action by the United Nations in the twenty-first century. They have charged the Secretary-General to keep a score-card, the results of which will determine whether we have been true and honourable custodians of the United Nations Charter. It is imperative for us to demonstrate individually, and through our collective efforts, that we can leave for succeeding generations the kind of world envisioned in our Charter.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Enrique Candioti, Secretary of State and Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina.

Mr. Candioti (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): In this, my first statement, allow me to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I believe that this is a timely opportunity to emphasize the great friendship that unites the Argentine Republic and Finland.

I also express my gratitude to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, another country that is a friend to Argentina, for the constructive way in which he presided over the Assembly's work at the last session.

We also offer a cordial welcome to Tuvalu upon its entry into the United Nations and extend our friendship and cooperation to its people.

This debate is taking place after a very productive exchange of opinions at the highest level during the Millennium Summit, which we hope will mark, together with the final Declaration, the beginning of a new era leading to a more equitable world and a more effective Organization, in accordance with objectives set out by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "We the peoples". For my country, this is also an opportunity to set out before the General Assembly the principles and objectives of our foreign policy.

The Government of President Fernando de la Rúa, who took office on 10 December 1999, has drafted a foreign policy on the basis of the mandate it received from the Argentine people. This policy aims at strengthening our integration with neighbouring countries, intensifying the hemispheric dialogue and promoting economic development, social progress, free trade and a ban on weapons of mass destruction.

Argentina is determined to participate on the international scene jointly to build a peaceful and stable world based on the values of representative democracy, the rule of law, the protection and promotion of human rights, respect for the environment, economic liberalization, social progress, international cooperation and the maintenance of international peace and security, pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter. Today, as was stated at the Millennium Summit, these aspirations are shared by the vast majority of Members of this Organization.

On the basis of its ongoing interests, the Government has set as a priority objective its political and economic integration with the other States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and associate members Chile and Bolivia. We have agreed with these countries to consolidate MERCOSUR by adopting the measures necessary to promote greater integration on the basis of balance and equity. We have made significant progress towards the expansion of our markets since the signing of the Treaty of Asunción in 1991. This was the fruit of the determination of the member countries to implement an open trade policy in their economic programmes.

The creation of MERCOSUR was a political decision transcending the economic sphere. MERCOSUR provides a political forum within which trust, cooperation and the pursuit of full integration in all areas foster the increasing complementarity and convergence of our interests. Bolivia and Chile have bound themselves to MERCOSUR as associate members in the context of the Free Trade Area and we trust that they will become full members in the near future.

As a consequence of the broadening political and economic dimensions of our integration project, we are also witnessing the convergence of approaches to defence and security in our region. This contributes to a continental perspective based on confidence and cooperation. We and our neighbours have made progress towards the creation of the joint MERCOSUR, Bolivian and Chilean zone of peace. Argentina is part of a nuclear-free Latin America reflecting the peaceful and cooperative security necessary to harmonious development.

At the same time, as a member of the Rio Group, which has now grown to include Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, Argentina has pursued its high-level political consultations and cooperation in order to maintain peace, strengthen representative democracy and promote sustainable development in the region. It is our firm intention that our countries shall enjoy greater participation in the global economy. At the recent summit convened in Brasilia to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of Brazil, the Presidents of all the South American countries reaffirmed the spirit of understanding and harmony that marks its relations on the basis of these principles and objectives.

The consolidation of democratic stability in Latin America continues to be a central policy of the Argentine Government. We do not interfere in the domestic affairs of others and we respect international law. We promote the consolidation of democratic processes on the basis of our deep conviction that free, regular and transparent elections and a plurality of political parties are essential instruments for affirming and guaranteeing the institutional nature of democracy.

My country also reaffirms its commitment to eradicating poverty, inequity and social exclusion and to ensuring equal opportunity throughout the region. We shall continue to pursue our joint action in the regional and global campaign against drug trafficking, terrorism, corruption, the illegal trade in arms and organized crime.

The Argentine Republic has a natural interest in the South Atlantic that is reflected in our participation in the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic, comprised of 21 African and three Latin American countries. At the fifth ministerial meeting held in Buenos Aires in October 1998, a plan of action was adopted to implement our shared objectives in the peaceful settlement of disputes, economic cooperation, development, the conservation of fishery resources, the fight against drug trafficking and the protection of the environment.

My country is in favour of free trade in order to achieve development and the eradication of poverty. The Argentine Government believes that protectionism not only generates the deflection of trade and the closure of markets, but also constitutes a form of discrimination. Argentina urges the entire international community to commit itself seriously to eliminating distortions of trade and will continue to fight for these objectives. In this regard, we believe that progress is being made in negotiations on the free trade agreement of the Americas to create a hemispheric free trade area by the year 2005.

In the World Trade Organization, our country has provided new impetus to the efforts to launch a new round to broaden trade liberalization, particularly in agriculture.

Argentina also continues to support negotiations to develop political and economic association between MERCOSUR and the European Union, including, in this framework, the gradual liberalization of agricultural trade and services.

We are constantly seeking new ways to integrate ourselves with the world. The realities of technological change and continual innovation require developing countries to adapt to a scheme of international economic integration based on a new paradigm of production. The challenge is to ensure the access of the least developed countries to this process of constant technological change and innovation. There can be no doubt that the international community — in particular the United Nations — must cooperate to promote the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries with sufficient flexibility and breadth so that

technological innovations reach those countries with fewer resources.

In his report "We the peoples", the Secretary-General quite rightly attaches great importance to this task. Without the adequate dissemination of and access to the new technologies of the digital revolution, we will see the gap between rich and poor widen. Individual States and the international community as a whole must therefore find solutions that guarantee greater fairness in the use of digital information.

Argentina remains fully committed to the international community's efforts to protect the environment from the negative impact of human activities. In this regard we reaffirm our commitment to the principles of sustainable development agreed upon in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development — principles that were reflected in the Rio Declaration on the environment and in Agenda 21. Equally, we would like to stress the importance of making adequate preparation — during this very fifty-fifth General Assembly — for the conference to be held in 2002 to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

Moreover, we feel it is necessary to consolidate the international legal regimes in the field of environmental protection. In this context, and bearing in mind the devastating consequences of atmospheric warming on the global ecosystem and on human life, we attach special importance to the entry into force, as soon as possible, of the Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The twenty-first century was preceded by a prolonged strategic and ideological confrontation, which has given way to a moment in history in which representative democracy, human rights and open economies are shared values. At the same time, we are facing a more complex world that has yet to engender a stable international order. The explosion of serious intra-State conflicts — as we have seen in the Balkans or in Africa — are signs of the emergence of a new stage in conflicts — a stage in which, regrettably, conflicts are based on ethnic, cultural and religious differences.

The Republic of Argentina aspires to contribute to achieving multilateral consensus aimed at reducing and neutralizing risks to peace and at facilitating the development of nations. We believe that if this consensus were based on greater democratization in international relations this would increase the efficacy and the functioning of the international system.

Since it is impossible for individual States to face these threats alone, it is necessary to adopt cooperative security policies to eliminate the potential risk of conflicts and to strengthen the stability and security of legal regimes. It is essential that we face in a united fashion the immediate and underlying causes of conflicts, which often arise because of the lack of economic opportunities and because of social inequalities.

The Members of the United Nations face the challenge of finding a response to questions raised by recent international crises, including the international humanitarian crises. My country believes that the principle of non-intervention must be duly respected because it is the pillar underpinning relations between independent States. At the same time, we cannot conceal our concern at the explosion of violence against ethnic, racial or religious minorities.

In particular we are concerned about the situation of vulnerable groups, such as refugees and internally displaced persons, and about the situation of children in armed conflicts. Consequently we believe that the international community cannot remain indifferent and must provide an adequate response to humanitarian crises.

We must emphasize the role that can be played by international tribunals to create awareness that impunity will not be tolerated. The International Criminal Court and the tribunals for Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone, which have been created, constitute important instruments of deterrence.

In addition to the internal reforms that the Secretary-General has initiated with singular success within his sphere of competence, the United Nations must give priority to more democratic consensus-building in the decision-making processes of the main and subsidiary organs of the system. This needs to be done in a fashion that does not hamper the speed and effectively with which solutions are found to the daily problems facing the Organization.

Maintenance of international peace and security is a primary responsibility of the Security Council, which must be strengthened. If these responsibilities are not fully shouldered, no other activity of the United

Nations can be carried out with any certainty of success.

Since the inception of multilateral diplomacy, Argentina has defended the principle of the sovereign equality of States. It is therefore not surprising that our country maintains that the reform of the Security Council must be arrived at via consensus, and this consensus must not entail new discrimination, privileges or exclusions.

The vast majority of the international community — seeking to ensure respect for the values of democracy and universality — believes that a new Security Council will have to allow for greater participation by all. This cannot be achieved if new permanent seats — like those established in 1945 — are established. Reform of the Council must allow all States a greater opportunity to participate in the Council, which must not be monopolized by only a few countries. For this reason, Argentina supports exclusively an increase in the number of non-permanent members and the introduction of restrictions on the right of the veto, without losing sight of the ultimate objective of eliminating it altogether. We support the adoption of rules of procedure that guarantee transparency and the possibility of the participation of all Member States in this organ.

Our support for the peaceful settlement of disputes continues to be a fundamental feature of our foreign policy. President de la Rúa reiterated the Argentine commitment to continue participating in peacekeeping operations established by the Security Council. The most recent conflicts have shown how important efficient training of the forces participating in these missions is. Experience acquired by Argentina in 42 years of participating in these missions is reflected in the creation of the joint Argentine centre for training for peacekeeping operations. It has been operating since 1995, with the participation of personnel from other Member States. We also established the centre for training of security forces for foreign missions. Argentina, which is currently involved in nine peacekeeping operations, places at the disposal of the United Nations its military and police training centres. We also support the initiatives to strengthen the rapid deployment capacity of the Organization, and we would support restructuring efforts aimed at optimizing the planning and support for peacekeeping operations both at Headquarters and in the field.

My country was pleased to receive the conclusions and recommendations recently issued by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and contained in the Brahimi report. These provide a valuable basis for building international consensus aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Organization to prevent conflicts and to maintain and re-establish peace. Argentina, which is part of the Bureau of the Special Committee for Peacekeeping Operations, supports the conducting, as soon as possible, of a detailed analysis of the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report — including its possible financial implications — with a view to achieving its early implementation.

My Government is particularly concerned about the problems related to the security and protection of those who participate in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions. The personnel of the United Nations and associated personnel, as well as the personnel of other agencies that provide humanitarian assistance, are facing increasingly risks situations, as we have seen recently in the tragic events that have occurred around the world. Consequently, Argentina, which is a party to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, has urged an improvement in the security situation of United Nations personnel via the adoption of practical and legal measures, including financial-planning and implementation measures for these operations.

In this context we should also reiterate the duty of the international community to provide assistance to those countries facing emergency situations, which arise as a result either of natural disasters or of armed conflicts. In this area a significant role can be played by the "White Helmets" initiative, which involves the establishment of bodies of specialized volunteers organized by the Members of the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to peoples who are victims of extreme emergencies and also to mitigate the serious problems that affect these people.

We should also mention the issue of AIDS which particularly affects the poorest areas of the world. More than 34 million people suffer from this illness today. The virus has spread dramatically. In particular, more than two thirds of the victims are in sub-Saharan Africa. This pandemic is aggravating poverty. The illness and death of so many workers is draining already weakened economies. The impact of this phenomenon on the future of the affected regions will

probably mean greater marginalization and will undermine the foundations of stability, security and peace. The international community and this Organization and its specialized agencies must contribute urgently all available resources to the fight against this disease.

I would like to refer in particular to the sovereignty dispute between my country and the United Kingdom regarding the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands as well as the surrounding seas.

The recovery of the full exercise of sovereignty over this part of our national territory, respecting the interests of the inhabitants and international law, is a precept enshrined in the Constitution of Argentina. This item is on the agenda of the Organization, which in numerous resolutions has requested the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to renew negotiations to find a just and definitive solution to the sovereignty controversy, thus putting an end to a colonial situation imposed by force in 1833.

Today, in accordance with that request, Argentina reiterates once again its complete willingness to renew bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom to resolve this question. We reiterate our support for the mission of good offices with which the General Assembly charged the Secretary-General to assist the parties in achieving this objective.

The world stage in the post-cold-war era is the scene of ethnic conflicts, civil wars, massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, illegal traffic in arms and other threats. At the same, time we are seeing the unprecedented spread of representative democracy and economic and technological modernization.

Against this backdrop, our main task is to reach agreements that will enable us to face these challenges and seize these opportunities in the best way possible.

Equipping the United Nations for the challenges of the new millennium is the great task awaiting us. All Member States must undertake to fulfil this commitment if our efforts are to be crowned with success. Argentina is committed to this task and will continue making its contribution.

On 31 December next, my country will end its term as a member of the Security Council. During its two-year term, Argentina has done its utmost to contribute constructively to decision-making and consensus-building on all items on the Council's agenda.

On the basis of our potential and bearing in mind the features of the current international situation, Argentina intends, in the twenty-first century, to continue to play an active part in the consolidation of peace and international security and in the development of peoples.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Allan Cruickshank, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Cruickshank (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election. I am confident that his vision and energy will guide this session to a successful conclusion.

I also thank Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who led the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly with distinction and efficiency.

I commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the esteemed Secretary-General of this Organization, for the thoughtful recommendations which he has put forward in his report to the Millennium Summit entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". His vision and stewardship have proved to be vital factors in advancing the work and mission of the United Nations at this critical time in the history of the Organization and the world.

I join the previous speakers in welcoming the nation of Tuvalu as the 189th and newest Member of the United Nations family. Our newest entrant is also the smallest Member country of the Organization, with a population of 10,000 and a land area of nine square miles. It was very pleasing to my delegation to see the leader of that nation proudly take his place among the other leaders of the world in what was the largest gathering of heads of State or Government ever assembled in one place, the Millennium Summit. There is a special affinity between the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Tuvalu. We are among the smallest constituents of the Organization. We share similar historical and constitutional experiences. We face the same environmental threats. We look forward, with confidence, to a future involving the creative

utilization of the phenomenal developments in the area of information technology.

My country's Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Sir James F. Mitchell, joined other leaders from the Caribbean Community, of which he is the current Chairman, in denouncing the growing insensitivity towards and disregard for the interests of small developing countries on the part of the powerful in today's world. In his address to the Millennium Summit the Prime Minister noted that while our religious heritage has taught us how to reach across the boundaries of nations through the very inspirational guideline, "love your neighbour as yourself", small and vulnerable island States such as our own are being victimized by the application of international rules crafted by the mighty to serve their own purposes, oblivious to the concerns, and consequences for the well-being, of others. We are all affected by the modalities of the global village which we inhabit, through revolutionary developments in communication technology. Indeed, we have all become neighbours, and yet the competition among the world's peoples has become fiercer, with the rich countries surging ahead and widening the gap with poor countries. This gap is now related not only to material wealth, but also, frighteningly, to the ability of less developed countries to compete in the accepted medium of communication, because of the existence of an ever-widening digital divide.

The Millennium Summit concluded with the adoption by world leaders of a Declaration affirming the importance of the United Nations and the need to strengthen its peacekeeping operations, as well as making commitments to targeted reductions in poverty, the levels of inhuman living conditions experienced by impoverished nations around the world, the incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS and the provision of basic education for all children. On the other hand, we are aware that the current world order is rapidly falling out of step with today's realities and that there is a pressing need for the international community to come together and address the numerous challenges before us.

We must acknowledge that efforts to address old issues, like world poverty and its distribution, as well as new ones arising from globalization, the rapid growth of information technology and the resulting digital divide, the consequences of the environmental degradation of our planet, HIV/AIDS and gender issues, among others, have largely been inadequate. Our common and daunting task is therefore to ensure that this globalized world will be beneficial for all and not just for some. More than ever before, there is an urgent need to foster a consciousness of universal moral values in order to deal with present-day problems, all of which are assuming an increasingly global dimension. The promotion of peace and human rights, the settling of armed conflicts, both within and among States, the protection of immigrants, the safeguarding of the environment, the battle against terrible diseases, the fight against drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and economic and political corruption are issues which no nation, regardless of how wealthy or powerful, can successfully address alone. They concern the entire human community and must be addressed and resolved through common universal efforts.

My country, a small State in the Caribbean, has always been aware of its interdependence with other countries for its prosperity and security. We have moved to advance our interests through multilateral cooperation in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), CARICOM, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Commonwealth and the institutions of the United Nations system. For a small developing country like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, multilateralism is not an option; it is an integral part of our policies and programmes to enhance our standard of living and create a better life for all of our people. I therefore reiterate my country's commitment to and support for the work of the United Nations and its agencies in this regard.

The Millennium Summit provided an appropriate opportunity for the assembled leaders to rededicate themselves to the attempt to have an impact on and change for the better the quality of life of the world's poorest people, who are trapped in a vicious cycle of deprivation and suffering. The Summit will have proved worthwhile if it is remembered not as a high-profile event to make the transition to a new millennium, but as an event that made the transition from words to deeds. The times demand nothing less.

The security, welfare and development of people must, in the context of any new world order, dominate the attention of the world's multilateral financial institutions, as well as of the United Nations. We must undertake sustained and concerted efforts to free our people from poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease.

While micro-credit and other poverty-alleviation programmes have been successful, much needs to be done to eradicate poverty. In this era of plenty, millions still suffer from hunger.

We had curbed old diseases like malaria, cholera and tuberculosis, but they have reappeared in new and drug-resistant forms. Deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS are spreading at an alarming pace. The leaders of the Caribbean Community have placed combating this pandemic at the top of the regional agenda. This scourge has already claimed the lives of over 10 million people. It is projected to claim the lives of over 200 million by the year 2010, the majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

The developed world is not spared, either. Worldwide figures indicate that 34 million people are living with the disease, over 18 million have died since the beginning of the epidemic and over 13 million children have become orphaned. In the Caribbean region, the disease now threatens the human resource development efforts of CARICOM and could reverse the social and economic gains of the countries in that subregion. The prevalence rate in the wider Caribbean is estimated at 172 cases per 100,000 people, the highest rate of prevalence in the Americas, and second, in terms of the growth rate, to sub-Saharan Africa. A United Nations AIDS survey in 1999 showed that over 360,000 adults and children in our region were living with the disease. There is no immunity. International cooperation in the medical, ethical and legal fields must be intensified if the disease is to be contained.

We cannot preach about human rights and the universality of the United Nations while at the same time ignoring the aspirations of over 23 million people in the Republic of China on Taiwan. It is the view of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines delegation that the time has come when serious consideration should be given to the eligibility of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a Member of the United Nations. In this regard, my Government is urging that the subject be placed on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We urge every Member State of this noble Organization to give its full support to this worthy initiative for a country whose democratic credentials cannot be challenged.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the progress made in the Middle East peace process thus far, and expresses the hope that through dialogue, compromise and goodwill, the dream of lasting peace may become a reality.

If countries like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are to survive globalization, the international community must give careful and urgent consideration to the following measures: the revitalization of growth in developed countries; the lowering of interest rates; access to the world's markets for the products of developing countries; the reduction of debt and the debt-service burden; the reversal of the deteriorating situation in the marketing arrangements for primary products produced in the developing countries; economic diversification; increasing the levels of official development assistance and humanitarian aid; reductions in net capital flows from bilateral and multilateral sources; and combating the negative consequences of the graduation of some countries like ours, by international financial institutions, from concessionary funding arrangements.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines shares the concerns of other developing countries with regard to the general decline in official development assistance and the flow of foreign direct investment to developing countries. We look forward to the consultation on financing for development planned for 2001.

The changing world environment dictates the need for the revitalization and restructuring of the various organs of the United Nations organizations, but my Government attaches very high priority to the revitalization and strengthening of the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for sound development, including economic development. We share the view that the United Nations should be encouraged to develop its full potential in the area of international economic cooperation and should be endowed with the requisite resources to contribute to solving the serious economic and social problems facing developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and development.

We commend those donor countries that have made financial contributions to the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission to assist the development of an environmental vulnerability index, and call for the early adoption by the international community of a vulnerability index that would serve as a guide for multilateral financial institutions and the

United Nations on the specific vulnerabilities of developing countries.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like other small island developing States in the strategically located Caribbean, continues to be plagued by the endemic problems of the production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances. This modern day scourge continues to pose serious problems which threaten to destroy the social and moral fabric of our communities. My Government is fully committed to the ongoing process of cooperation with other countries to counter these illegal activities. In this regard, I wish to reiterate in this forum our complete support for the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), developed by the member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS) to monitor countries' cooperation in the international fight against the drug trade. I also take this opportunity to urge that more resources be allocated through collaborative efforts by the international community to encourage farmers to keep away from the production of illicit crops.

In his address to the Millennium Summit, the Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) spoke of the outstanding and invaluable record of good governance and respect for human rights and democracy in the entire Caribbean region. These are aspects of our society of which we are eternally proud.

Recently in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, our constitutional democracy was put to the test through open expressions of dissent, but withstood the ordeal through dialogue and compromise. My Government is pleased to put on record its appreciation to the Vincentian people for upholding democratic values and respecting the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law as fundamental principles by which our beloved country exists and governs itself. I also wish to express gratitude to CARICOM, to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), to the churches, to the National Youth Council, to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, to the Employers' Federation and to many individuals and other institutions for their invaluable contributions in bringing about a swift resolution of the matter. My Government has long recognized the urgent need for constitutional reform and will continue to work with other interested parties to bring about meaningful change that would seek, among other things, to strengthen the foundations of our democracy. As full members of this body, we have seen, at close quarters, the importance of constitutional reform in the promotion of democracy, stability and economic development.

We also recognize that constitutional reform is crucial to strengthening our own integration processes within the Caribbean Community, including the establishment of a Caribbean court of justice, to be, inter alia, the authoritative body adjudicating on matters pertaining to the interpretation and implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established CARICOM.

Many matters of profound importance to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean Community as a whole are included in the agenda of this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. These include: sustainable development, the future of United Nations reform, the International Criminal Court and human rights, the death penalty and financing for development.

I wish, once again, to focus the attention of this noble gathering to the issue of the Caribbean banana trade with the European Union (EU). The facts are well documented. Banana exports to the European Union from my country and similarly from Dominica, Saint Lucia and other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are crucial to the economies of these countries and represent over half of all export earnings in some cases. The industry provides substantial employment for many families in Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, my own country.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is appreciative of the efforts of the European Commission and other parties which seek to bring about an amicable and equitable solution to the dispute. However we are deeply concerned that, should the tariff quota regime be eliminated as a means of ensuring conformity with the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling, this would have immeasurable harmful consequences for our economy. It will lead to the destruction of the Caribbean banana industry and negatively affect other ACP supplying States where exports are also crucial to the economy.

The two alternative solutions being proposed by the European Commission, that is a first come, first served system, along with a tariff rate quota and, if that proves impracticable, moving directly to a tariff only system, would prove to be disadvantageous and

disastrous for the Caribbean industry. Neither system ensures access.

We therefore urge the interested parties to the dispute to use their substantial influence to bring about the much-needed breakthrough which will facilitate a resolution that is acceptable to all parties. An efficacious settlement of this long-standing issue will support our efforts, as a small economically vulnerable island State, in eradicating poverty and maintaining peace and economic security, which are vital for the achievement of economic diversification within a reasonable period of transition.

While we recognize that there are structural and inherent disadvantages that inhibit our ability to compete with highly integrated operations on the market, we ask that an equitable solution be sought in order to allow our people to engage meaningfully in trade and development, rather than be forever subjected to the aid and dependency syndrome. Our expressed desire to hold on to our banana industry, which served us well, in no way reflects any misunderstanding of the realities of the present day trade and economic environment.

My delegation also wishes to express its concern over the procedural obstacles raised in Geneva within the WTO that would prevent consideration of the waiver requested in respect of the new ACP-EU Partnership Agreement if it includes bananas without advice on how the regime will be formed. My country and other members of the Caribbean Community have been actively engaged in diversifying our economies throughout the last quarter of the last century. This has involved activities in the agricultural, manufacturing, tourism and service sectors. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a direct corollary of this thrust, we have improved air access to our country and my Government continues to prioritize the education of our people to prepare them for the opportunities that will accrue.

My Government will continue to honour its commitments to all international agreements to which it is signatory. In furtherance to our international obligation we have signed the following: the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, the United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea, the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. All of these instruments were deposited with the Secretary General during the Millennium Summit.

During his speech at the Millennium Summit, Prime Minister Mitchell stated that:

> "Small island States such as our own, with an enviable record of good governance and human rights, have seen the mighty in the banana trade using the international rules — crafted by them — impede our economic growth."

Similarly, the verdicts that have been imposed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on our financial services, without any deference to our rights to be heard, demonstrate total disregard for the well-being of small vulnerable States attempting to diversify their economies. I echo Prime Minister Mitchell's sentiment, "Where is the fairness in free trade?"

Offshore financial services is one of our chosen avenues of economic diversification. We believe that we are capable of offering a useful, professional and mutually beneficial service to our clients. Accordingly, in 1995 we embarked on a comprehensive legislative exercise to ensure that we would put in place a regulatory and supervisory framework to adequately administer the conduct of international financial businesses operating in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In our efforts to further strengthen our regulatory regime against money laundering activities, we enacted six additional pieces of offshore legislation. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is committed to being a responsible member of the international community, including by playing its part in the war against money laundering. We believe that those who toil to build a better life for themselves, their children, their grandchildren and any other beneficiaries, should be afforded the right of privacy in their affairs. Such people should have access to facilities that will preserve that privacy, and the opportunity should be created for them to optimize and maximize their wealth. It is, however, important to note that whilst we believe in the preservation of privacy, we are also resolute in efforts to ensure that persons of undesirable character and conduct are not allowed to take advantage of the opportunities that are available in our international finance sector.

My country and others in the Caribbean Community are deeply concerned that the so-called harmful tax initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is designed to frustrate tax competition, and that it threatens the sovereignty of small island States desperately seeking creative avenues for survival. Such action on the part of the OECD could encourage the creation of a tax cartel, thereby removing the possibility of lower taxes from those who wish to legitimately escape them through the exercise of free choice. It would also close off an area of diversification and economic activity in which poor developing countries can be competitive and which they have actively promoted for a long time. The unilateral practices of the OECD, the Financial Stability Forum and the Financial Action Task Force also impact negatively on the burden of taxation in wealthy countries, impair the competitive capacity of Caribbean jurisprudence in the provision of a global financial service and stifle economic growth in the 47 blacklisted countries, with all the concomitant evils.

The small island States of the Caribbean are among those countries most at risk from the adverse effects of climate change. Already, many of our islands are experiencing those effects in areas that impact directly on the important tourism sector of our economies. We are also prone to extremely damaging natural disasters, especially hurricanes and storm surges, which visit us annually with increasing frequency and ferocity. Our diverse region also experiences droughts and floods, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, with equally devastating effects, if less regularly than the pleasantly named perennials. The continued committed support of the international community is crucial in complementing the work of those States in addressing these serious problems.

Our survival as a region is intimately interwoven with our environment. Our physical and economic limitations should not be further burdened by the transshipment of hazardous waste through our waterways. Such actions are a flagrant violation of our human rights and an affront to our sovereign dignity. We therefore reiterate the call for the Caribbean Sea to be a nuclear-free zone in the context of sustainable development.

In closing, I take this opportunity to pay tribute in this forum to one who has upheld the highest ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, through service to our country, to the Caribbean and to the international community. I speak of the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and current Chairman of the Caribbean Community, The Right Honourable Sir James F. Mitchell. For 34 years he has served as an elected member of our legislature. He has seen our country through the stages of constitutional development from crown colony to internal self-government, and finally, as our longest serving Prime Minister, to a fully independent State. For us in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, it is difficult to contemplate public life without him. His address at the Millennium Summit was his last to this body, for he has decided to demit office as Prime Minister before the twenty-first anniversary of our political independence, on 27 October 2000. Sir James Mitchell has made us all proud by his long, dedicated and visionary service. The initiatives taken by him in the area of land reform, which empowered people through land ownership, are exemplary. I think it is appropriate that, on behalf of Vincentians everywhere, I extend sincere gratitude to him from this rostrum.

The challenge is ours: to turn our words into action and to agree on a common vision of our future.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of Niger, His Excellency Mr. Ousmane Moutari.

Mr. Moutari (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the very outset to convey to the countries and institutions represented here a message of sincere friendship from the people of Niger along with its fervent wish to maintain and continue to strengthen the links of peaceful coexistence and of fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation with all the other peoples of the world.

My warm welcome and hearty congratulations go to Tuvalu, the latest country to join the United Nations family.

With the 24 November 1999 presidential elections and the 31 December 1999 legislative elections, our people emerged from a period of political instability and economic decline with every confidence in the resiliency of the democratic institutions established by our 18 July 1999 constitution, and with strengthened determination to ensure that the universal ideals of peace, freedom, justice and equity will prevail in Niger, throughout Africa, and everywhere in the world.

We are participating in this great gathering at the beginning of the twenty-first century, proud of being among the democratic nations and committed, at home and internationally, to the establishment of institutional and legal provisions based on free and equal participation by all, on transparency, on responsibility and on solidarity.

Today's Niger is experiencing the same freeing of creative forces that results from the triumph of freedom, and the same upsurge in individual and collective initiative that is today being generated in democratic societies everywhere. We are no less optimistic about the inevitable triumph of the universal values of which the General Assembly is the shrine. But we also feel the same wrenching pain over the uncertain future caused by the persistence of conflicts and the destitution of the vast majority who are crushed beneath the burden of debt, endemic diseases, illiteracy and, above all, the troubling inadequacies of the remedies prescribed to deal effectively with the ills afflicting humankind.

Hence our even more profound attachment to the principles and ideals of the Charter and our full conviction that the United Nations, which is at risk of being out of step with current developments towards increasingly participatory management of our common public resources, will undertake the necessary reforms to make its institutions and organs more responsive to the aspirations of the people they are supposed to represent.

Refashioning the Organization to match the new century that is beginning, to make it a real instrument of change and to renew our hope goes far beyond simply restructuring its main bodies, subsidiary bodies and specialized agencies. We must also strive vigorously to open up the entire system to increasingly active partners, such as Parliaments, governmental regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, organizations of civil society, the media and the private sector, without ever losing sight of the primary vocation of the United Nations as an expression of the national will of Member States. This would greatly increase the international community's capacity for action in such varied areas as peace and international security, the fight against pandemics, especially HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication, the resolution of the question of debt and, generally speaking, the promotion of sustainable development in the world.

For many countries represented here the primary ongoing source of anguish comes from the absence of basic physical security for citizens who are victims of armed conflict, and the unacceptable proliferation of light weapons and small arms, which States that are unstable and economically drained have difficulty halting. Other forums, including the Organization of African Unity, have pointed out ways of resolving the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in close cooperation with the United Nations.

With regard to the Middle East, the recent failure of the Camp David process should further strengthen our determination in the tireless search for a just and lasting peace that can restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent State, and ensure the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. In Western Sahara, it is time that the relevant United Nations resolutions were implemented for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. In addition, the Iraqi people continue to be victims of an embargo that chiefly affects the most vulnerable sectors of society, including women and children. It is high time that the international community took the necessary measures to alleviate the pain of the Iraqi people.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, which are one of the major challenges facing the international community, my Government feels that concrete and sustained measures should be taken at three levels — national, regional and worldwide — to combat the illicit trade, proliferation and use of this type of weapon. In this regard, my Government is pleased that a United Nations mission recently visited the Niger in order to evaluate in the field the relevance of the request for financing submitted by my Government.

It is a pleasure for me to warmly thank the Governments of all interested States, particularly of France, Germany, Japan and Norway, for their financial contributions to the United Nations fund to assist States in the collection of small arms, which made that mission possible.

A draft submitted by my country forms part of the subregional and regional initiatives aimed at halting the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, such as the Moratorium adopted on 30 October 1998 by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the

Economic Community of West African States and the integrated project on security and development called Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development.

The handover, on 5 June, of weapons held by various groups of the former rebellion and the lighting on 25 September 2000 of a flame of peace at Agadez, Niger, create hope for a return to calm for the people of the Niger and the full implementation of projects designed with the welcome assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners of the Niger. In this regard, the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects next year bodes well. For the Niger the goal of that Conference should be to develop and strengthen international, regional and national efforts to prevent, combat, limit and eradicate illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons through strengthening national capacities in the areas of customs, police, justice and information.

Never before has humankind had such wealth and so much potential to create common well-being. Yet today more than half of the world population still lives in destitution, excluded from the benefits of globalization and of the digital revolution. We can certainly welcome the unanimous will expressed by the international community to reduce poverty by half by 2015. But we need to go beyond statements of faith to establish a real international development strategy firmly based on the eradication of absolute poverty and on reviving growth in the developing world, and particularly in Africa, the most vulnerable region.

The treatment of the question of the external debt of poor countries is one of the best barometers by which we can measure the real degree of the international community's commitment in the search for appropriate solutions to eradicate poverty. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, the present framework for debt alleviation, is too slow and too selective and comes with restrictive eligibility requirements that need to be made more flexible; otherwise, many countries will remain in perpetual poverty. Hence the urgent need to give fresh impetus to this Initiative.

It is also essential to cooperate closely at the international level in order to further strengthen the cohesiveness of the coordination mechanisms of the various initiatives for Africa, so that that continent can benefit more from development assistance.

Moreover, while not a panacea, information and communication technologies are important factors, for the developing world in general and for Africa in particular, of growth and integration into the global economy. The United Nations has a leading role to play in creating a partnership framework that would promote initiatives aimed at closing the digital divide so that technological benefits will not remain a remote promise.

The recent high-level debate of the Economic and Social Council on the role of information technology highlighted in a timely manner the urgent need to make the digital revolution a tool for development and to fairly distribute its benefits through international cooperation. My country also fully supports the recommendation of the high-level expert group, contained in the Secretary-General's report, calling for universal access to new technology to be set out in a General Assembly resolution as a basic human right.

The global partnership against AIDS in Africa, whose vitality was demonstrated during the Durban Conference, must henceforth be based, among other things, on the mobilization of sufficient resources, on prevention and on access to drugs.

In an altogether different area, my delegation believes that particular attention should be given to the insidious problem of malaria. Increasingly resistant to the medical treatment used so far, this illness — which above all affects the most vulnerable populations of women and children — is currently a source of profound concern for Africa. This was confirmed by the recent summit of heads of State held at Abuja, Nigeria, on the issue. That meeting highlighted the importance of preventive action and of increasing the means to combat malaria. There is thus a need for the international community to give this problem the full attention it deserves and to contribute further to mobilizing the necessary resources for the research, prevention, treatment and eradication of that disease.

At the threshold of the new millennium, the time is certainly right to rethink development. As the Secretary-General said at the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Bangkok, the time has indeed come for a new global deal for least developed countries. That new global compact will be aimed at

correcting imbalances and at making it possible for everyone to participate in the new world economy and to share equally in its benefits. Today, it is undeniable that globalization has been accompanied by heightened inequalities and that, given the way it has evolved, it will not be able to meet the expectations of poor countries, whose rural and urban populations are paying a heavy social price for that process.

Moreover, the failure of the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) Conference in Seattle has compromised the launching of what was supposed to be the development cycle that was finally to make it possible to attain the benefits of the much-touted trade liberalization. That development, it has been said in passing, is constantly being slowed by the protectionism of industrialized countries.

The United Nations, as the democratic and universal body with the mandate to achieve the objectives of development, must more than ever promote reform and coordination of the international mechanisms of trade and finance. To that end, our common Organization has the necessary moral authority to regulate the process of globalization in the common interest of all. There is therefore a need to strengthen its role and to put in place rules for good global governance that are capable of promoting — in the words of that hallowed phrase — globalization with a human face.

With the holding in 2001 of the international conference on financing for development and the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, we hold out the resolute hope that there will be greater mobilization of financial resources, better coordination of policies and more effective cooperation among development actors, in particular among Governments, the United Nations system, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society, so as to achieve the major objectives of poverty eradication and development.

The praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies deserves strong support, as that is in keeping with the will of our Organization to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the world.

We in Niger fully appreciate all the valuable assistance given by the United Nations system and friendly countries for the restoration of democracy. After more than a decade of political and institutional instability, Niger — one of the least developed countries of the world, which is bowing under the weight of the debt burden and the impact of the downward trend in official development assistance and of climatic vagaries — has seen a return to democracy, in accordance with the profound aspirations of our people. However, as was so well put in his swearing-in statement by the President of the Republic, Mr. Mamadou Tandja,

> "We are aware that the support of the international community is essential to succeed in this recovery. We therefore appeal to all countries that support peace and solidarity and to international organizations to accompany us in our efforts, on the basis of mutual beneficial interests and with strict respect for national sovereignty."

We would like formally to reiterate here our gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and all of Niger's development partners for the invaluable support they have constantly given my country and its people during their most difficult times.

By chance the schedule has it that Niger is speaking just before the end of the general debate of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the so-called Millennium Assembly. What, then, could be more natural than for me to conclude my statement by repeating our satisfaction with the outstanding work done by our brother, Mr. Kofi Annan, at the head of the universal Organization? Whether it be in the area of maintaining international peace and security or that of developed countries' providing development assistance to the least developed, the Secretary-General deserves our full trust, support and encouragement.

Namibia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, your predecessor, Mr. President, was a good President. His old companion in the struggle, the late Mr. Johnny Makatini, as demanding as he was in his lifetime, would have been as proud as we at seeing the unequalled diplomatic talents Mr. Gurirab displayed for a whole year. I pay humble tribute to him here on behalf of Niger. I say to him:

(*spoke in English*)

Theo, you will always be a freedom fighter.

(*spoke in French*)

As for you, Mr. President, we know that the torch that has been passed to you is in good hands. Your personal competence and Finland's tradition of always standing with the weakest leads us fervently to believe that the Millennium Summit's conclusions will find in you a true and committed advocate, so that at last our Organization can acquire the new habits required by the advent of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of the Marshall Islands, His Excellency Mr. Jackeo Relang.

Mr. Relang (Marshall Islands): I would like first of all to congratulate the President, on his assumption of the office of President of the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. I wish him every success in this difficult and inspiring task. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his exceptional leadership during the fifty-fourth session.

Allow me to include in this tribute the Secretary-General for his efforts and crucial role in maintaining and promoting the role of this Organization, and for his inspiration in strengthening its effectiveness and credibility with respect to peace, security, justice and development in the world.

I wish to add a few comments to the statement made earlier by the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum countries.

Let us pause for a moment to recognize the contribution of the founding fathers and framers of the United Nations and its Charter. They produced a document which, in large measure, has contributed to an ever-increasing consciousness of the prerequisites necessary for world peace. Today we should celebrate the existence of the United Nations and its accomplishments, both of which offer us the opportunity to reflect on how collectively we can better chart our path and articulate our goals more clearly for the next millennium. President Kessai Note's address to the Millennium Summit reaffirmed the adherence and commitment of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the principles enshrined in the Charter for the collective good of all people.

I take great pleasure in reiterating the Marshall Islands' warm welcome to the Government and peoples of Tuvalu, as the 189th Member of this Organization. Indeed, the admission of new Member States adds to the legitimacy of the United Nations.

On the other hand, the denial of membership in this Organization to the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan, who have made a significant and meaningful contribution to international development, is contrary not only to the true spirit of the United Nations Charter, but also to its principle of universality and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must strengthen the vital role of the Organization in achieving the goals of conflict prevention, maintenance of peace, regional stability, promotion of fundamental human rights and development of democracy and international progress, and in fulfilling the aspirations of peoples to self-determination and engagement, because the United Nations is the only Organization that can bring that shining light to those 23 million people. Furthermore, the United Nations is the only forum for Member States to build mutual trust and to resolve issues through peaceful dialogue. The guiding principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination must, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, continue to underpin our collective aspirations. This will require our concerted action in this new millennium.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands applauds and commends the unprecedented efforts made by the leaders of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, who have engaged in a dialogue that may help chart a course towards lasting peace in that peninsula. I wish to state also that the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands encourages the leaders of Israel and Palestine to seize the historic opportunity that is within reach to peacefully conclude a framework agreement towards lasting peace in the Middle East. I wish to commend the efforts of the United States of America in this regard.

The immutable law of change makes it necessary for the United Nations to continue to critically examine its performance and structures in search of practical and timely solutions. This it must certainly do, because

the current political landscape is vastly different from the one that prevailed 50 years ago. It is characterized by a more than threefold increase in the number of nations with membership in the United Nations, and by a heightened spirit of generosity and desire on the part of civil society and corporations to become more active players in the process of change. It is imperative, therefore, that those elements and structures which are antiquated, those which have ceased to promote the welfare of nations and those which no longer minister to the needs of a continually changing humanity be swept away and relegated to the pages of history.

A more comprehensive review and restructuring of the Security Council, in line with the spirit of achieving a broader base for decision-making through consensus and confidence-building, is clearly long overdue. Other critical issues in the reform process deserve further examination, with a view to restoring that body's dignity and legitimacy and strengthening the confidence and trust of the international community. Enlarging both the permanent and non-permanent categories while ensuring an equitable geographical distribution seems to be the way forward.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands remains committed to supporting the efforts by the Secretary-General and others to reform and streamline the mandates and activities of the United Nations and its other organizations and agencies. While the peacekeeping and general fund scales seem to be outdated, the process of reform must take seriously into account the limited responsibility and capacity of small island developing States such as the Marshall Islands to sustain their obligation in both categories. Also, now that this Organization stands at 189 Member States, 14 of them from the Pacific Region, the reconfiguration of our electoral grouping should be an additional matter to be placed on the table. It may be a complex one, but through our collective inspiration it can be an achievable goal, to be considered without further delay.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is keen to further develop its ongoing active role and cooperation with the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes. In the view of the Marshall Islands, those bodies' efforts to make their operational activities more effective and responsive to the special needs of small island developing States will undoubtedly play a key role in the new millennium. The expansion of the Resident Coordinator programme — which brings it closer to home, where it belongs — is a case in point.

While the human rights achievements recorded in the 50 years since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be acknowledged, there is a sense that much remains to be done before the world can truly claim that the Declaration has become a common standard of achievement. The Millennium Summit is a significant acknowledgement of the need for all States to work together, in a spirit of unity and cooperation, to ensure that the fruits of global development are shared and made more equitable and just for the benefit of humanity at large.

Within the mandate of its Charter to promote economic and social progress, peace and security, and sustainable development and prosperity, the United Nations is the only fully representative Organization capable of harmonizing our collective aspirations for a peaceful, stable and prosperous global village. The Republic of the Marshall Islands endorses Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century".

At the turn of the century, achievements have been realized, and this trend should be encouraged. Yet we are living under many threats. Acts of terrorism do not recognize national boundaries, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are poised to spread quickly throughout the world. Our decisive and collective response is therefore more than ever required. In many developing countries, poverty and the deprivation of basic human rights, especially as concerns women and children, seem directly linked to, and escalate, crime.

We must also strive to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. The universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a major concern.

Trafficking in drugs and small arms represents a considerable challenge and a major threat for small islands such as the Republic of the Marshall Islands, because of its geographic isolation and the fact that it lacks the required resources and capability to combat these phenomena. Our collective effort towards the creation of an effective global response to address all of these threats is urgently required.

We realize that global environmental degradation is of our own creation. The issue of global warming is a real threat to all, particularly to the Marshall Islands and to all small island developing States. There is no

doubt that the survival of populations and cultures is at stake.

The Marshall Islands has already lost metres of usable and habitable land due to climate change and sea-level rise, and the rate of loss is increasing. This is a matter of life and death. Implementing the legally binding commitments agreed in the Kyoto Protocol is the only significant step forward on the path of ensuring effective global action to combat climate change. There will be a terrible tragedy unless there is international cooperation. How will displaced populations — whatever the reasons for their being displaced — be able to enjoy and sustain their basic human rights for generations to come? Will their cultures and livelihoods be able to survive for the benefit of future generations?

Education and health are of paramount importance to every country in the world. Education is the key to the progress of any nation. We must collectively strive to ensure that an educated population makes up a healthy and prosperous society. I am pleased to report that the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands has taken some bold steps, by allocating the greatest amount of its limited resources towards the improvement of its education and health systems. I take this opportunity to appeal for the interest and support of the international community in joining us in this endeavour. I am particularly pleased to convey the deep appreciation of the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the Government of Italy for its generous support for our efforts to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The first phase of the Marshall Islands solar energy project would not have been implemented without its support, through the United Nations Trust Fund for New and Renewable Sources of Energy. The interest in and support of the international community for the implementation of the other phases of the project would be highly appreciated.

The Marshall Islands National Nutrition and Children's Council has been very active since its inception. In addition to establishing task forces on food and nutrition, suicide prevention, substance abuse, neglect and disability, it made another significant contribution with the agriculture, food and nutrition policy, as the Marshall Islands strives to meet its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Existing policies specifically aimed at the rights of the child are under review as we consider making the Convention a part of the Republic of the Marshall Islands legal system. A representative Commission on Sustainable Development has been established with the mandate of ensuring that the Barbados Programme of Action is implemented in all its aspects. Other legislation to curb illegal financial transactions will soon be introduced in the Parliament's current session.

These are some of the efforts being made by the Republic of the Marshall Islands as it strives to meet its treaty obligations and enhance the life of every citizen of the country. We cannot do it alone, and we appeal once again to the international community for support.

Let us have a United Nations that will meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation listened carefully to the statement of the Foreign Minister of Iraq. We would like to briefly clarify the following points.

First, the Foreign Minister of Iraq accused Kuwait of providing logistical support to United States and United Kingdom aircraft committing aggression against Iraq. Such accusations are inaccurate, although we have often heard them from Iraq. They fall within the "misinformation campaign" undertaken for some weeks now by Iraq against Kuwait, thus increasing tension and instability in the region.

Secondly, the presence of foreign troops in Kuwait is governed by defence and security agreements signed bilaterally by Kuwait with the five permanent members of the Security Council to preserve its security and stability. Kuwait signed them as a result of the brutal Iraqi invasion — a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of international law.

Thirdly, we wish to stress that Kuwait had not hosted any foreign forces before 2 August 1990. We had a principled and well-known position on that subject; however, the Iraqi invasion, as well as

continuous Iraqi threats and the lack of peaceful intentions on the part of the Iraqi regime, made it necessary for Kuwait to take such steps for the implementation of Security Council resolutions by Iraq and to preserve Kuwait's security and peace in the region.

Fourthly, as for the Iraqi Foreign Minister's claim that Iraq has fulfilled its commitments under relevant Security Council resolutions, we stated previously that certain principal commitments remain to be fulfilled by Iraq — mainly, freeing Kuwaiti prisoners of war, the return of stolen Kuwaiti property and the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The international community, which is represented by the Security Council, recognizes that many international and regional organizations unanimously agree that the Iraqi regime has yet to fulfil its obligations in order that sanctions against the long-suffering Iraqi people be lifted. We call on Iraq to implement all Security Council resolutions so that it can resume its place among the family of Arab and world States and so that this vital part of the world may regain its security and stability.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): I would like to respond briefly to the remarks made today by the Secretary of State and Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands.

The British Government does not accept the Secretary of State's remarks about sovereignty. We have no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the other British dependencies in the South Atlantic. Moreover, we have a duty to respect the right of self-determination of the people of the Falkland Islands, who have made clear their wish to remain British. The elected representatives of the islanders expressed their views clearly when they visited the United Nations for the debate in the Committee of 24 on 11 July this year. They asked the Committee to recognize that they, like any other democratic people, should be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination. As the democratic voice of the Falklands Islands people, they reiterated their view that they did not want to be part of Argentina.

Despite our differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, we continue to strengthen our bilateral relations — including this year through meetings between Prime Minister Blair and President de la Rua and between our Foreign Ministers — and to build on the agreement signed last year on practical arrangements on matters of common interest in the South Atlantic. We are confident that our relations will continue to flourish in that spirit of cooperation and mutual interest.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): The statement made by the Foreign Minister of Iraq clearly outlined the manifestations and elements of the Anglo-American aggression against Iraq and the Kuwaiti role in that aggression. Kuwait bears the same legal responsibility as the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

We have not threatened Kuwait in our latest statements. Iraq does not threaten. What we did was inform the international community of Kuwait's involvement in daily aggression against Iraq and its attempts to harm our interests.

The no-fly zones represent an illegitimate use of force against an independent State and a breach of the United Nations Charter and international law. The official spokesman of the United Nations has stated that the no-fly zones are the result of a unilateral decision unrelated to the United Nations. A former Secretary-General of the United Nations has also stated that the no-fly zones have no basis in Security Council resolutions. The majority of permanent members of the Security Council consider the imposition of no-fly zones to be an illegitimate use of force. Kuwait's legal responsibility arising from its involvement in this daily aggression against Iraq is therefore clear and irrefutable. United States and United Kingdom aircraft take off daily from Kuwait, as reflected in the reports of the Special Commission.

The representative of Kuwait once again raised the issue of the missing, with the aim of politicizing this humanitarian issue. I would stress yet again that Iraq is holding no prisoners and has not interest in doing so. There are, however, missing Kuwaiti, Iraqi and other nationals. The efforts of the Tripartite Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross to find these missing are being hampered by the insistence of the United States and the United Kingdom on being allowed to participate in the activities of these agencies and to politicize them, although those two countries have no missing nationals.

The representative of Kuwait raised the issue of Iraq's implementation of the Security Council's

resolutions. Iraq has fulfilled its obligations under those resolutions and the Security Council must now fulfil its own in return.

Mr. Cullen (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic, having listened to the statement made in reply by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, wishes to reaffirm the ideas put forth in the statement made in the general debate this afternoon by Secretary of State and Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Enrique Candioti.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I apologize for seeking to speak for a second time, though briefly.

I should like to reaffirm our denial of the allegations made by the representative of Iraq. As to the threats made against Kuwait, which he denied, Iraq has been waging a campaign for several weeks, as I have mentioned, to increase instability and tension in the region. Most notable have been the accusations and threats made by an Iraqi official on the anniversary of the Iraqi invasion. Letters have been sent to the Secretary-General and issued as formal documents. The most recent threat was that made by the Iraqi Oil Minister, who accused Kuwait of sabotaging Iraqi oil installations. We in turn have sent letters to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General that have also been issued as official documents.

As for Kuwaiti prisoners, what the Iraqi representative said is not new. All we ask is that Iraq fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999) and cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Let me recall that Iraq has been boycotting its meetings since December 1998. Iraq also refuses to cooperate with the Secretary-General's high-level coordinator pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999).

Finally, the Iraqi representative has repeatedly declared that all of Iraq's obligations have been discharged. What of its obligations under resolution 1284 (1999)? Iraq continues to refuse to implement that resolution.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for asking for the floor again.

I repeat that Iraq has not waged such a campaign. We have pointed out the daily Kuwaiti and Saudi aggression against Iraq since 1991 and the attempts that have been made to sabotage our interests. Once again, the representative of Kuwait raised the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals and I have responded to it. He also raised the issue of Iraq's implementation of Security Council 1284 (1999). I believe he did so at the behest of his masters.

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.